

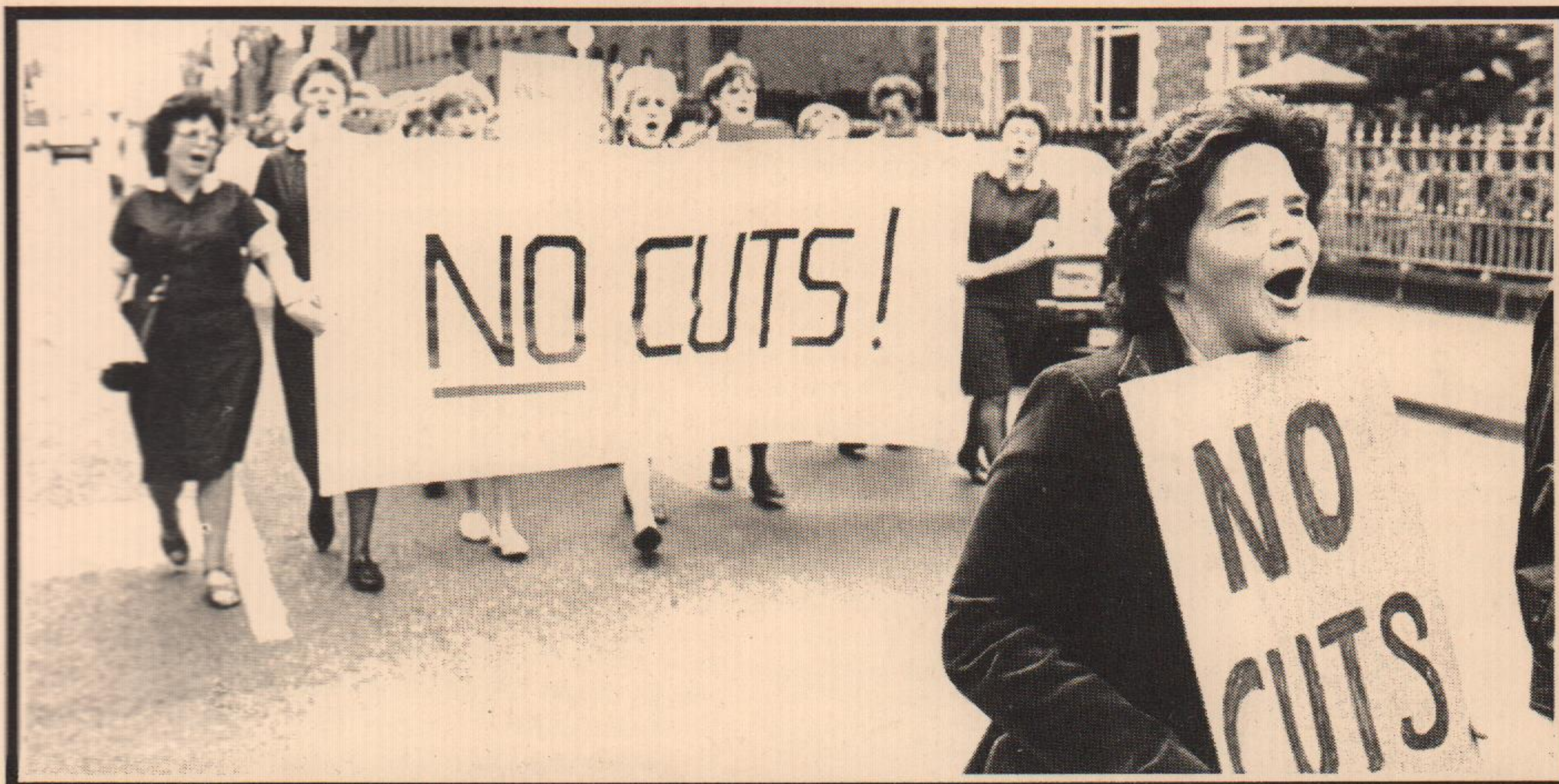
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South Africa – The National Question



Connolly & the Protestant Working Class

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I.W.G.

The Irish Workers Group fights to regroup into a democratic centralist fighting party all socialists in Ireland who are genuinely committed to the overthrow of capitalism by working class revolution.

The IWG stands squarely in the political tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. IWG is the Irish section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International which works to build a new world party of socialist revolution, the Leninist Trotskyist International.

The MRCI has sections also in Britain, France, Germany, Austria as well as engaging in discussions with other tendencies across the globe.

IWG is committed to open democratic debate, on questions of party, programme or immediate struggles, with socialist groups or tendencies in the working class, especially those claiming to stand in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky.

In day-to-day struggle IWG calls for the maximum unity in action with all other socialist groups, republicans, feminists or others where there is agreement on one or more key objectives to be fought for, while insisting upon the right of all to continue their independent propaganda in all such united fronts.

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as health workers march . . . union leaders connive

Break off all talks with Fianna Fáil!

Fight for all-out Health Services Strike Action

To Reverse All Cuts Now!

For the first time in 20 years the general election in spring made it possible for the southern Irish ruling class to *unite politically* in its offensive against the working class, the unemployed and the poor, at least for the crucial period of the next two years or so. Fianna Fáil is in power and enjoys two major advantages. Although it lacks an overall majority it is assured of support from Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats for its harshest measures, while on the other hand it can draw on a deep reservoir of *illusions* among many leaders and many sections of the trade unions and among some sections of the 'left', disastrous illusions which portray Fianna Fáil as a party more amenable to compromise with the working class.

Tens of thousands who voted for Fianna Fáil have already been sickened and roused to open revolt by the immediate and savage cutbacks in the most basic state services to the ill, the old and the poor, yet at the very peak of these attacks the trade union leaders are brazenly forging a pact with Fianna Fáil instead of co-ordinating and developing the many spontaneous work stoppages against the cuts to go beyond *protest* to effective action by the movement as a whole.

Tragically, it was *the parliamentary "left"* who cleared the way for this easy political gain for the ruling class – Spring, McGiolla, Gregory, Kemmy & Co. – at the very moment when all of them without exception were proclaiming a new dawn for the Irish 'left'. In the savage confrontations that lie ahead no faith must be placed in any of them, nor in the trade union leaderships who broadly share their opportunism and self-interest; but neither can they be ignored. A clear balance sheet is needed by militants of what has been happening politically to the working class movement, along with a clear picture of how the land lies ahead of us at this point, of how we must organise our defence, and of how we must deal with our two-faced parliamentary and trade union misleaders.

LABOUR'S DECEPTION

While Labour pretends that its recent 'break' from Coalition marked a new turn to independent working class politics, nothing in its post-election role suggests that any-

thing has really changed. In the three Coalitions of 1973, June 1981 and Nov. 1982, the Labour Party's 10% of the seats was needed by Fine Gael to put together a government committed to financial austerity, law and order, and open collaboration with the sectarian northern state. Labour obliged and helped bring in measure after measure hitting directly against workers and the poor – most memorably the removal of food subsidies, the first major health cuts, measures to harass unemployed claimants, layoffs in state companies and repressive Criminal Justice and extradition laws.

If Labour had remained in opposition the *possibilities* for a political mobilisation of the unions, unemployed and women would have been far greater and the obstacles far weaker. Labour's crime, as the official party of the unions, a crime which it *camouflaged* with the lying pretence of 'moderating' Fine Gael's austerity, was precisely that *they made it possible* for austerity measures to go ahead piecemeal while blocking labour movement political opposition. The legacy of Labour's treachery is that now an even more demoralised and politically confused working class is faced in 1987 by a more united bourgeoisie determined to push through a savage programme.

Over a period of 15 years of intermittent coalitions, Labour has rescued the ruling class from the consequences of the historic division between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. Those party divisions create the illusion of a "democratic choice" and camouflage the real *class* nature of the issues. By having two capitalist political movements alternating in government, the political dominance of the bourgeoisie has been kept for decades at over 80% of Dáil seats, with a corresponding dominance ideologically and socially.

For its treacherous services in maintaining this *political mould* whenever it was under threat, Labour has declined in support from 17% in 1969 to 6.4% in 1987. Nor has the so-called Workers Party made up even half of the lost electoral base of workers' votes. The capitalist parties have increased their hold, but most importantly, *major ideological gains have been made* for the idea that the working class, women and the six-county minority must pay for the crisis of capitalism and imperialism in Ireland. That was the overwhelming message of the recent elections.

WP & LEFT TDs - NO BETTER!

The political posturing of Labour, WP and the "Left" deputies on 10 March 1987 merely continues their previous records. Like Labour, MacGiolla's "Workers Party", and "Left TDs" Gregory and Kemmy, have always ultimately rescued the capitalist parties from the rope of hung parliaments.

On 30 June 1981 Fine Gael and Labour

were able to form the government *only* because they were supported by "Democratic Socialist" Jim Kemmy and because the Workers Party's first deputy, Sherlock, and labour independent Noel Browne *abstained* rather than vote against Garret Fitzgerald. Kemmy had wanted the "left" to remain in opposition, but clearly this was not a matter of principle for him when it came to the vote!

On 9 March 1982 the Workers Party trio and Tony Gregory voted for Haughey and thus tipped Fianna Fáil into power while Kemmy voted (uselessly in fact) for Fine Gael! These were conscious acts of *class collaboration*. Gregory acted for the most narrow local interests in order to secure his own base. The others equally feared for their own electoral fortunes if another election was caused by their refusal help break the logjam of the capitalist parties. All of them explicitly justified their actions in terms of 'getting whatever they could' for the working class. All of them rejected the idea that there is any kind of *principle* involved in maintaining total political independence from capitalist parties and governments.

In March '87 for the first time, these gentlemen voted *against* both Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil and openly congratulated themselves *for having maintained their independence* as a parliamentary 'left'. But they did so only because it would cost them nothing to wear 'left' camouflage at a moment when the capitalist parties in any case clearly *had no use* for their support.

Gregory made it clear that he *preferred* to have Haughey in power than a "more right-wing" pact among the *three* capitalist parties, that therefore he would *abstain*, to allow Haughey to break the numbers stalemate, as if Haughey would be beholden to such 'champions of the working class' on the opposition benches. Yet FG had already promised support for FF's worst measures!

Gregory expressed, in his attitude to Fianna Fáil, one of most characteristic features of such class collaboration in Ireland – the illusion that Fianna Fáil is not really a thoroughgoing party of capitalism, of the class enemy, but a party somehow compelled by its nature to make substantial concessions to the working class.

FF - PARTY OF THE CLASS ENEMY

Fianna Fáil Has always been profoundly hostile to class-conscious struggle of any kind, camouflaging its commitment to bourgeois order in the utopian sanctimonious language of one of its founding aims: "*The development of a social system in which, as far as possible, equal opportunity will be afforded to every Irish citizen to live a noble and useful Christian life*". At the same time, in its propaganda, Fianna Fáil could appeal crudely to the sentiment of the poor against

the wealthy, as in its 1932 general election posters which attacked the Free State as "Government by the rich and for the rich", showing Cosgrave refusing the pleas of "the masses" with one hand and handing money-bags to "the classes" (dressed in top hats) with the other hand. This *populist* ideology has always been useful to Fianna Fáil in some degree.

All capitalist parties appeal to "the interests of the people as a whole" as against the separate interests of the working class, but such populism is far more possible for Fianna Fáil because of the historic *hegemony* it was allowed by Labour to establish over the mass of Southern Irish workers. FF was always able to find powerful sections in the union leaderships to bloc with it against any form of open class struggle. From the late '30s till the '50s FF did not hesitate to stir up catholic nationalist xenophobia against militants associated with British-based unions, and against 'reds', with the effect of splitting the trade union and labour movement down the middle and enforcing the national doctrine of 'Labour must wait'.

DeValera's populist economic nationalism tided Fianna Fáil through three decades of mass emigration and economic decline. Yet despite a complete reversal to a policy of mortgaging the economy to transnational capitalism, Fianna Fáil has still been able to exert a strong populist appeal, far more than any other capitalist party, and to rely upon a deep *fund of illusions* among workers, trade union leaders and sections of the left.

The massive expansion of the economy which it presided over from 1960 to 1970 gave it a new prestige although its dependence on imperialism weakened FF's ability to use republican rhetoric to its advantage. But primary responsibility for Fianna Fáil's hold over Irish workers rests with the leaderships within the working class.

Labour's growth in the sixties at Fianna Fáil's expense was squandered by the opportunism of the 1973 and subsequent coalitions - with the encouragement of the trade union bureaucracy. The union leaders were desperately seeking to stem the tide of workers' militancy and could use parliamentary promises to weaken the huge

waves of strike action for better wages. They also certainly did not want 'their' party taking an independent line on the nationalist revolt when bourgeois stability in both parts of Ireland was best served by a Labour-Fine Gael coalition at the time. That Coalition squandered the independent gains Labour had made against FF in the sixties.

STALINISTS COURT FF

More consciously, illusions in Fianna Fáil have been sustained by the propaganda of both Stalinists and republicans, despite the long history of repression suffered by both at the hands of FF! The Stalinist CPI (which has a very strong conservative presence in the unelected bureaucracy of the unions) has always portrayed Fianna Fáil as the "progressive" wing of the ruling class, as against imperialism. These stalinist class traitors have time and again urged workers to mark preferences for Fianna Fáil on their ballot papers! They consistently work to build (the illusion of) popular fronts with Fianna Fáil at the expense of working class independence.

REPUBLICANS AND FF

And the republican movement, politically petty-bourgeois to the core despite its revolutionary struggle and its working class following in the Six Counties, retains many affinities with Fianna Fáil in its politics. Fianna Fáil has consistently enacted severe repression against the physical-force republicans, yet the inherent limitedness of Sinn Féin's social base has repeatedly compelled it to call for of a pan-nationalist alliances within which *a seat is consciously reserved for Fianna Fáil*. SF's latest "Scenario for Peace" (APRN 7/5/87) argues a perspective pitched precisely at the same level as Haughey's own republican rhetoric, stripped absolutely of any concrete *revolutionary democratic* content whatever.

Fianna Fáil is not a 'two-class' party in which now one class, now another, carries the day depending on the pressures on it. It is a crystallised capitalist party which continues to exploit all its historically given victories over the labour movement. Nor is it a movement in which an 'anti-imperialist' section co-habits with a collaborationist

leadership. The distinctively populist and anti-Partition character of its rhetoric is *camouflage* for the decisive capitalist political interests that rule in every organ and district of the party. Such rhetoric commits it to *nothing*. On the contrary, the social and political dominance it exercises on this basis enables FF time and again to act far more decisively and effectively on behalf of the ruling class and imperialism, against workers and republicans.

Fianna Fáil promises 'bloom and boom', care and concern for the weak and poor, jobs for the jobless etc. *ad nauseum*, but in the small print, only ever 'as far as possible'. What is 'possible' is always and only defined by capitalist interests. There are *no* forces or sections within Fianna Fáil with which the working class movement can ever form an alliance in pursuit of its needs. Conscious working class struggle must be waged at all times against Fianna Fáil with the same determination as against Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats. Although the capitalist parties may take opposite sides on particular measures which have a definite progressive content, such as divorce, it is dangerously wrong to see any of these parties as 'more progressive' than any other.

BLOCKING WITH FIANNA FÁIL

In the Dáil, Gregory and the Workers Party actually believed that the left could gain more for the workers by allowing FF into power. Labour was merely more realistic in its opportunism - FF would not be beholden to any of them. They all bleated about 'left unity' without proposing a single concrete campaign of action or calling a single open public meeting around the idea in the working class! Eventually WP were shamed into voting with Labour because it was stealing the 'left' spotlight by voting against all nominees of the capitalist parties!

A vast difference could have been made to the plight now facing workers if these 'lefts' had any conception of *class struggle*. They should have all united against both Haughey and Fitzgerald, *as a matter of principle*, and called open meetings to mobilise a mass campaign against the cuts. The capitalist parties would then have been forced for the first time to go a long way to liquidating the sham differences between themselves, which



are used to marginalise class politics.

For these 'left' parliamentary cretins, however, posturing, brokerage and opportunist gain is the permanent order of the day; *principle* is a fetish for fundamentalists! But working class political independence is not conjured by Trotskyists out of thin air. Its *necessity* is proven time and again in practical struggle for socialism. Its abandonment is recorded time and again in bloody defeats for the working class in country after country. It is inherent in the whole socialist understanding of politics and the class struggle - in the programme and tradition of Marx and Lenin, upheld and developed since only by Trotsky.



Pin-striped Haughey poses with 1981 hunger striking workers in Clondalkin occupation. Sham image of workers' friend covers for savage attacks.

THE PRICE OF ILLUSIONS

In the trade unions the leading bureaucrats made no secret of their preference for dealing with Fianna Fáil. Attley, Carroll, Tinkler etc., with the support of Labour and the Workers Party, repeatedly called for a pact, a 'consensus', with the government, offering "restraint" by the working class in return for vacuous promises of national development.

Since then it has been proven to all that Fianna Fáil lied its way through the election. It has reversed every promise made in the campaign. Health cuts hurt the sick and the poor, it had declared, to rally votes against Fine Gael's austerity proposals, but no sooner in office than it implemented a far more savage programme of health cuts! Yet still the union leaders have pressed on with their collaboration with Fianna Fáil. Committees have been set up between union officials and Departmental officials in order to conjure up the required string of glass beads.

Ten years ago the same people went through the same charade to devise so-called "National Understandings", lists of promises of reforms and social developments in exchange for pay 'restraint'. Within a year of each, the union leaders themselves were complaining that the promises had not been kept - with the exception of the pay restraint which was always the first and immediate item of the "Understanding" to be signed away by the union leaders. And that was in a period of growing borrowing from abroad for spending on new projects!

Now the union leaders are going through the same motions despite the radically changed budgetary conditions compared to ten

years ago, despite Fianna Fáil's brazen reversal of all its election rhetoric and despite the fact that section after section of health service workers are marching in outrage at the Government's policies.

PUBLIC SECTOR PAY

The truth is that Carroll, Attley, Tinkler and the ICTU bureaucrats are determined to play the *bourgeois* role of patriotic leaders, to help save the 'country', the 'national interest', the whole existing system, in its deepening crisis. They are *resigned* that workers will "share" the burden of solving the state's financial crisis, but at the same time they are determined that they themselves, as union leaders, must prove their own indispensability by bringing about a "plan for national recovery" - with Fianna Fáil.

The bottom line for the union leaders is to preserve their own role as brokers between workers and the state, in an orderly 'industrial relations process'. The new talks with Fianna Fáil will have as their main function to keep the workers in check with empty promises of economic development to divert attention from their empty pockets, and this at a time when prospects for the Irish economy were never worse, and prospects for the international capitalist economy at the present moment, on which Ireland is so utterly dependent, are headed towards another downturn.

The union leaders in the *Electricity Supply Board*, with ATGWU's Tinkler and TASS's Kearney in the forefront, gave another demonstration of the same self-interested posturing, in the first week of May. After 30 days' strike notice they pulled the plugs and disrupted the whole electrified economy on May 5th, simply to get negotiations which produced nothing they had not already been offered.

Within 36 hours they had called it off. They did not want to seriously fight the public sector pay embargo because *they accept* the bosses' viewpoint that workers must pay the cost of the crisis. Nor did they wish to link up their claim with all the pending claims of other public sector workers such as Aer Lingus, An Post etc. There are endless precedents of this annual charade by the ICTU and union leaders - send out one strong section to fight all on their own; let them suffer a masive onslaught and be forced to settle for half of nothing; then let the other sections meekly accept that they are all getting the best that could be got! The ESB strike thus went exactly according to plan, inviting a propaganda pounding as a go-it-alone isolated minority, while the ESB workers were not mobilised to reply by sending delegations to other organised sectors of workers or to the communities.

Tinkler & Co. could thus be certain that none of them would want to continue the strike when he announced that they were making do with what was already on offer, *and* accepting 1500 proposed 'voluntary' redundancies plus productivity conditions on every outstanding claim!

Any serious policy to defend wages and win the most minimum claims in the public and private sectors must clearly have at its heart the fight to link up all claims on the widest possible basis, and to put democratic rank and file meetings in full control of the

action, with officials held strictly to mandates of democratic strike committees. That is equally the case in the urgent fight to resist the cuts in public services.

FIGHTING THE CUTS

Hospital workers in every part of the country have been on the march almost daily against the widespread closure of wards, sackings of 3,500 nursing and ancillary workers and the savage cuts in conditions - including in some areas complete abolition of wages for trainee nurses. Union leaders in the health services are determined to go on with *token* protest stoppages instead of the necessary *all-out strike action* without which Fianna Fáil cannot be made to back off.

Cowardly LGPSU leaders persuaded their Conference to make it a matter of individual voluntary decision whether to collect the new £10 per day hospital charges. The next day, 15th May, delegates fought back and had the non-cooperation with the charges made mandatory. The union leaders resisted to the end, arguing for continued talks with Fianna Fáil as a better way, and reversed the decision yet again on collecting the charges! They must not be trusted by the rank and file to lead the struggle!

There is a total contradiction between holding talks now with Fianna Fáil and giving the necessary leadership to the tens of thousands of health workers who have shown a determination to fight. The collaborationist leaders are in a race to produce a package of chimerical promises - in which no doubt grandiose promises will be made about *future* health services - in order to head off real action now.

Alongside these cuts, businessmen are being let off with the theft of collected VAT wherever they have successfully evaded handing it over for three years; and private medicine and the powerful bourgeois consultants in the hospitals are benefiting at the expense of the most impoverished, the aged and the crippled.

A central slogan that must be raised immediately in all protest actions is to *Force the union leaders out of their talks with Fianna Fáil Now!*

CANCEL ALL CUTS NOW!

Workers on both sides of the Border are facing similar attacks on public services, and similar misleadership which seeks to *feign* a fight by limiting action and leadership to merely token stoppages of separate sections and isolated individual resistance. Rank and file action committees must take the leadership into their own hands now, for all-out action! *There must be no reliance on the unelected, unaccountable officials, but continue to demand that they put all union resources at the disposal of a united fight.* A fighting alliance of organised public sector workers needs to be convened immediately, democratically organised by elected and recallable workplace delegates and shopstewards. Nothing less must be fought for than *Cancel and restore all the cuts!*

Anti-cuts committees are urgently needed to link democratic local trade union organisations and the communities, and organisations of the unemployed. Workplaces must directly place demands on the Trades Councils to force them to convene open campaign meetings to build on this basis!

SEA Referendum

"Ireland" is not "a neutral country" and the Irish ruling class is not "neutral" in its foreign policy. Just as it acts on behalf of capitalist interests at home at the expense of the working class, the unemployed and the poor, so also it stands squarely in the camp of **imperialist capitalism** abroad.

There is no mystery as to why! The Irish Republic is in reality a semi-colony of modern world capitalism. The survival of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and PDs, and of the industrialists, traders and big farmers who keep them in power, depends on their collaboration in every possible way with the major economic powers who make up the EEC and NATO.

COLLUSION WITH NATO

The Irish ruling class and Irish capitalists play an insignificant role abroad in *directly* exploiting the most oppressed and exploited semi-colonies of the "Third World", but that does not mean that they ever can be a genuine ally of those oppressed nations, not to speak of openly siding with them in direct conflicts with the US or EEC powers. Indeed, as part of the EEC since 1973 Ireland actively enforces the discriminatory trade terms which the EEC operates against the Third World and which breed famine and impoverishment there for the sake of European superprofits.

For years Ireland, as one of the EEC states, has refused to give aid to the Nicaraguan people in their life and death struggle with the barbarous Contra squads created by the US. For years Ireland as one of the EEC states has colluded with the barbarism of South African apartheid instead of isolating that regime and aiding the black masses.

The same EEC states maintain at unbelievable expense a vast nuclear arsenal threatening total armageddon to the countries of Eastern Europe and the USSR, fundamentally because they and the US want to restore capitalism there and reduce those countries to super-exploited semi-colonial workshops for western capitalism. Not only is Ireland not neutral in this - it is one of the most anti-communist countries in the west! For years Ireland has integrated its air space and telecommunications and its industrial standards with those of NATO and Ireland also enforces Pentagon's bans on high-tech exports to the USSR.

Yet at the same time the politicians, the clergy and the petty bourgeoisie go on endlessly and sickeningly about so-called "Irish neutrality", even though the major figures in all the Irish capitalist parties - including the SDLP - are on record in favour of eventual entry into an EEC imperialist military alliance "if the price is right". These liars and charlatans can quietly go about giving the fullest practical aid to imperialism precisely because they have the *camouflage* of popular

illusions in so-called "neutrality", in the myth of Ireland as an honest broker.

Irish military neutrality in the Second Imperialist War served DeValera's aim to bolster his anti-Partition *rhetoric* while he jailed republicans, stirred up nationalist hostility against working class militants, and propped up Irish capitalism with policies of economic nationalism. That wartime neutrality has since been woven into a populist *myth* of Ireland as "neutral" in general.

Precisely because NATO has not needed to have us as a *formal member*, "honest broker Ireland" has served as a useful tool for the major powers when they wanted to construct an acceptable 'peacekeeping force' from time to time, such as now in south Lebanon where the Irish army serves as a one-way barrier allowing the Israeli state free rein to crush its opponents. But a close look at this 'honest broker' shows that it has refused to vote even with the majority of the non-imperialist countries in the UN for a total boycott of the Apartheid state.

ACTION! NOT ILLUSIONS!

Sadly, instead of organising *real solidarity action* against imperialist aggression and oppression - Nicaragua and South Africa being only two immediate examples - the union leaders, the left of the Labour Party, the Workers Party, the stalinist Communist Party simply try to compete with the capitalist politicians in reassuring us of "our" proud tradition of "neutrality" and the need to maintain this in the constitution. McGiolla even called recently for a whole *new* bourgeois constitution!

At the present moment these forces call on us to vote 'no' to the foreign policy section of the Single European Act in order to supposedly 'protect Irish sovereignty'. All these misleaders and would-be misleaders of the Irish working class are promoting poisonous illusions in "our" Irish bourgeois constitution and "our" Irish sovereignty as if it were or ever could be a real obstacle to EEC and NATO imperialism - *instead of* fighting to mobilise real urgently needed *action* by organised workers to impose workers' embargoes on all dealings with South Africa and to force this state to give aid to Nicaragua!

These are the kind of actions that are really needed. These are the only kind of actions that *can break* the imperialist EEC's "common foreign policy". What needs to be fought are the actual acts of imperialist policy. Trying to block the ruling classes of Europe from declaring their *aspiration* for common foreign policy *in general* is a forlorn diversion into mere shadow boxing.

BACKWARD-LOOKING UTOPIANS

Sinn Féin, for its part, offers us the most consistent *nationalist utopianism* on the issue - it wants not only to intervene to stop the bourgeoisies of Europe from declaring their intention to go on discussing political cooperation but it also wants to pull Ireland out of the EEC and construct an *economically independent* Ireland! Despite the

Only workers' action can smash EEC imperialist policies

progressive content of Sinn Féin's struggle in the North, this economic doctrine must be frankly labelled as *reactionary*. Socialists fight for the most thorough *international* cooperation and integration of production, under socialist working class control worldwide, as the key to human progress. Progress is not possible on any other basis.

FOR A SPOILED VOTE!

Title III is the article in the SEA which the Court said infringes Irish Constitutional claims of sovereignty in determining foreign policy. Title III, however, makes no concrete change in Ireland's common foreign policy with imperialism - from Korea, 1950, through Cuba, Vietnam and Palestine to Nicaragua and Libya today. There is not a single concrete measure in the Title that can be blocked by forcing it to be renegotiated or preventing its ratification. On the contrary, to believe that a vote against is a blow against imperialism is a dangerously wrong belief.

That is why we argue that Irish workers and all who seriously care about striking a blow against the barbarism of 20th century imperialism, should cast aside all illusions in the ruling class pretence of neutrality, and in the constitution of the state, by abstaining in the referendum. Not passively by staying at home, but actively by going to the polling booth and spoiling the voting paper with slogans demanding aid for Nicaragua against imperialism now.

Rather than making any real strides towards the utopian dream of a democratic united capitalist Europe (which is what the SEA's authors had in mind), the EEC as a whole will relentlessly fall under the sway of the most powerful capitalist interests in Europe, politically and militarily. Abstention on the SEA does not mean indifference of any kind to the consequences of this process which has been under way since the formation of NATO (1949), and the EEC (1957). What workers, socialists and other fighters against imperialism must do is to mobilise the working class organisations in struggles on the concrete issues this imperialist bloc poses to the oppressed and the working class.

Aid to Nicaragua and a workers' embargo on all dealings with South Africa are the two most vital and urgent issues. These and many more issues will demand concrete direct action on the basis of united struggle of workers across Europe, struggles which can give real content to the fight to break up the military alliances of NATO and the W. European Union. In such genuinely internationalist struggle there is no room for neutrality.

● *We fight for workers' action to open the books of the state and big business and expose all secret dealings of an imperialist and militarist character.*

● *We fight against all Cold War measures and blockades - for defence of the USSR against imperialism, and of the other countries where capitalism has been abolished even though workers there have yet to overthrow their bureaucratic rulers and create workers' democracy and socialism.*

● *We fight for total solidarity against imperialism with all struggles of workers and the oppressed across the globe.*

● *Most importantly that means now fighting for trade union action throughout Ireland for a workers' embargo on South Africa instead of waiting for this rervile pro-imperialist Irish ruling class to impose sham gestures of sanctions.*

GENERAL ELECTION IN THE NORTH

The IWG calls, in the Six Counties, for a critical support vote for Sinn Féin in the General Election. The basis and content of this position has been spelled out in previous issues of *Class Struggle*. Such critical support for a party which is not organically of the working class is exceptional. In the absence of revolutionary communist candidates, the need for such an electoral tactic is dictated by the fact that Sinn Féin has de facto hegemony over the most combative mass section of the working class there, who are in open revolt against the existence of the sectarian state.

These circumstances mean that such a vote is an act of solidarity with the anti-Unionist revolt in what is essentially a plebiscite on the continued existence of that statelet. At the same time we continue to argue openly the bankruptcy of Sinn Féin's strategy and to expose the utopian petty-bourgeois limitations of its programme which is incapable of opening the road to the Workers' Republic.

Such circumstances do not apply in the South where, consequently IWG refused to call for votes even on a critical basis, for Sinn Féin, in the spring general election. To do so, we argued, was to actively help build nationalist illusions among the working class in a cross-class Sinn Féin which, in addition, actively rejected revolutionary political perspectives within the southern state.

We argue for anti-Unionist workers and subjective socialists in Sinn Féin to force the movement to support the self-organisation of the masses around a concrete fighting programme against repression and discrimination, and to subordinate to the needs of such a movement the guerrilla action which renders the masses passive speculators. We call on workers who look to Sinn Féin to test its seriousness about the class struggle, to demand that SF drop its moralistic fetish of not taking its seats at Westminster and to demand that SF should use that parliament as a platform to support and call for revolutionary opposition to the British imperialist state.

Dodging the Issues – The Clinics Defence Campaign

On Saturday 28th March the Defend the Clinics Campaign held a national activists' conference, three months after the Hamilton Judgement in favour of SPUC in the high court. The court's prohibition on non-directive pregnancy counselling, or any form of information on safe abortion facilities abroad, was an outrageous attack on the rights of women which demanded to be fought urgently by organised defiance, mass protest and mass direct action.

The Hamilton Judgement cites the 8th Amendment to the constitution as the legal basis for its ban on access to abortion information. As such, this is the first interpretation of the 8th Amendment (1983) in the courts and of what it is likely to mean for women in Ireland. Although a Supreme Court ruling is still pending, it is unlikely to overturn the original Judgement. This means that it will be impossible to reverse the Judgement and make access to information on abortion legal unless the 8th Amendment is repealed.

The possible consequences of the SPUC led action are numerous and far reaching - representing as they do a renewed attack on women's health and reproductive rights. The court ruling may soon be used as the basis for further actions against women by the self-appointed moral police - to attack forms of contraception such as 'the morning after pill' or the I.U.D. or perhaps even to censor foreign publications containing the addresses of clinics abroad.

WHOLLY INADEQUATE

Yet, against the background of this major onslaught on women, the Defend the Clinics Campaign has effectively chosen to ignore the essential legal and political realities. Instead, at its national conference, an extremely long document put together by the ad-hoc Dublin Steering Committee - and not made available in any form for discussion or amendment in advance - was read to the conference hall and presented as a report and programme for the campaign, in a manner that made it impossible to seriously debate alternative perspectives. Its recommendations confirm the ad-hoc and wholly inadequate perspectives adopted by the campaign over the previous six months.

The leadership took a full hour and a half of this one-afternoon conference to read

out and argue for this lengthy, vacuous and fudged document which they had not had the principle to circulate in advance. They then proceeded to allow less than two hours for the entire agenda of delegates' motions to be taken, during which they also took the lion's share of the speaking time to call from the platform for rejection of motions which challenged their perspectives.

The Committee's document centred on committing the campaign to supposedly undermining the ban by building a national network of information on abortion. It also committed the campaign to a whole list of types of action - demos, rallies, public meetings, road-shows, street theatre etc. While this report said many things which no activist would disagree with, nevertheless its plan of action remained at the level of generality and vague schemes.

REPEAL OF 8TH AMENDMENT

Although the conference adopted a motion put forward by the Cork group which correctly urged the *priority* of fighting to *reverse the Judgement*, subsequent conference decisions voided this of any meaning. How is this priority to be fought for? The leadership campaigned for *rejection* of an IWG motion which argued the only way to reverse the judgement - a fight to *repeal the 8th Amendment!* Its opponents conceded that 'it is imperative in our general propaganda to *refer* to the 8th Amendment and other draconian laws as barriers to democracy and women's rights', but they drew the conclusion that *repeal cannot be made a goal of the campaign* because 'the momentum is not with us at this time to do so!'. No hint was given of when or in what circumstances the tide would ever be turned in favour of a fight for repeal *without* a conscious lead being given for this goal. By way of contrast to this defeatism, the Divorce Action Group in the preceding weeks had taken up again the fight for a constitutional amendment on Divorce despite its recent defeat at the polls.

Furthermore, the leadership's position means that while reference to the 8th Amendment, 1861 Act etc. may be invoked ritually from time to time (lest women forget which actual legal provisions and Acts are concretely used to oppress them) the campaign will not actively take on the challenge these legal shackles represent. This is because the leaders have pre-determined in advance that the overall strategy of the campaign must depend on what is deemed 'achievable' within existing circumstances, with existing forces and allies. The organisers will not take on what is necessary to the task of rolling back the latest wave of attacks on women but rather what is acceptable to maintaining 'maximum unity and support' within 'a broad-based campaign'. As revolutionary communists IWG have no

objection to broadening the base of the campaign to include everyone who is prepared to *fight* for the key needs posed by this present attack on women. However, we are vehemently opposed to ignoring the key political tasks so as to secure the acceptance of respectable 'supporters' who it is claimed would not be prepared to demand repeal of the 8th Amendment.

DEFIANCE OR EVASION?

Instead, the campaign leadership have re-affirmed their commitment to a one-sided perspective of diffuse acts of defiance wherever possible, thereby substituting the myth that we can somehow make the law unworkable, despite all the power of the establishment behind it! It is true that in the past, exemplary flouting of the law has helped speed up legal reform, but only on measures that the ruling classes had no determined interests in resisting. The Irish ruling class clearly recognised its own need to modernise contraception laws in the 1970s, for example. Thus this campaign's overall perspective is totally inadequate to ensuring that women regain *legal* access to their right to information, and to aim for anything less than this is an insult to all concerned.

But is the campaign even serious about *defiance*? When faced with an IWG motion which argued that the most effective form of focussed and organised defiance would be to persuade the Open Line and Well Woman clinics to re-open their banned services, and for the campaign to mobilise a movement to defend this action - it was rejected out of hand. To this line of action the organisers counterposed the alternative of an ad-hoc counselling service which is presently being provided by a limited number of volunteers. The campaign has yet to face up to the question of *what will happen in the event of injunctions being brought against this alternative service*. Dismantle it and regroup yet again under a new umbrella? Refuse to defy the actual injunctions of the courts, but continue calling on individuals to invite injunctions? How is that *defiance* of the legal attack? If the injunctions are obeyed and the service folds up, it will prove twice as difficult to re-start another counselling service at a later date. Even if this were possible, the prospect of an endlessly itinerant service is a less than satisfactory one.

At the campaign conference the IWG argued in a resolution (one of several that IWG also circulated in advance to campaign meetings in Dublin and Galway) that the current campaign slogan of '*Access, Information, Choice*' is inadequate because it can mean anything to anybody and it commits nobody to anything definite. We proposed that the slogan be supplemented by one which expresses the fighting nature and political aims of the campaign - *Defiance, Defence and Repeal*. The leadership again succeeded in its campaign to reject this position and to preserve instead the original fudged formula.

On the positive side, the conference voted to permit the campaign to use the word 'abortion' in public, by adopting 'A Woman's Right to Know About Abortion' as

a mini-slogan. It is not so long ago since the campaign had to dump its own posters in the bin as the result of a dispute over whether the word 'abortion' should be given a high profile within campaign literature at all!

SQUANDERED OPPORTUNITIES

The Hamilton Judgement has provoked an angry response from women throughout the whole country. Many of them rallied to the early meetings of the campaign this year, eager to launch a fightback. Unfortunately, these energies have been squandered.

For a year after it was formed, the Defend the Clinics Campaign convened no open meetings and built nothing. When, a year later in October 1986, a week before the court hearing, a public meeting brought a huge response from women, the leaders refused to back the call for a picket on the court during the hearings. But a week *after* the judgement was announced a substantial picket was mounted on the Four Courts amidst snowstorms. More than 100 people had to be turned away from an overcrowded public meeting the next evening - a meeting devoted to fine stirring speeches but one in which hundreds of activists were allowed a total of ten minutes for contributions from the floor. At the same time a Young Fine Gael spokesperson was given speaking rights to express 'opposition' to restrictions on the clinics (and this despite their own party's complicity in this offensive against women) and then proceeded to condemn abortion!

Subsequent campaign planning meetings, which originally attracted hundreds of concerned women, have dwindled constantly in numbers ever since. The demonstration organised for February 7th drew only 500. Not even then did the leaders seriously attempt to organise and involve those who did turn out to the rally by calling for and building for an open democratic conference. They waited a full month while meetings declined even further.

This was followed by the ludicrous decision to concentrate campaign energies on preparation for a *women-only* vigil on International Women's Day - an event which not surprisingly drew only a handful of activists. To effectively transform the campaign into an organising committee for celebration of International Women's Day was to ditch its commitment to winning the active support of tens of thousands of women and men, especially in the trade unions which had already publicly given an opening to the campaign. The right of women to caucus and demonstrate separately is a right that IWG has always supported, but it was inexcusable to argue for a 'women-only vigil' at the *expense* of the *promised* mobilisation for that day.

It was against this background of a flagging campaign and of disgruntled activists that the end-of-March conference took place, even then without any open attempt to win new forces through a publicity campaign. Yet in re-affirming the campaign's previous positions, this conference has *changed nothing*.

SINGLE ISSUE' DOCTRINAIRE

These perspectives risk condemning the campaign to a sporadic existence and eroding its base and support. They will leave DCC groups without a central *political* orientation and consign them instead to the sole activities of distributing the information-pack and offering an ad-hoc counselling service. While the enormous effort involved in putting together and distributing the pack is a testimony to the commitment of the activists, it has already run up against resistance connected with the legal realities. Some unions have refused to handle the pack because of the legal implications of the Judgement. Yet the campaign is not prepared to raise resolutions in those unions calling for a fight to repeal the Amendment which made the judgement possible. Although the campaign refuses to openly call for a fight to repeal the legal basis for these attacks, it clearly cannot escape the logic of the *legal* obstacles! The clandestine information service, although indispensable as an emergency measure, does nothing to halt or reverse the tide of attacks on women. In the absence of a serious political fightback, the campaign's momentum will gradually recede, with these emergency measures steadily becoming a shadowy service, leaving individual women feeling isolated and defeated.

In the past, similar campaigns e.g. the Anti-Amendment campaign, the Contraceptive Action Programme, with similar methods and leaderships from the same political groupings, made no tangible political gains and built no on-going organisation to develop the struggle for women's liberation. We cannot allow this to happen again.

Mistaken Political Methods

The perspectives of the campaign, now 'legitimised' by a profoundly undemocratic conference, had their origins in the 'socialist feminism' of the *Peoples Democracy* group, *dogmatic* advocates of strictly limited 'single issue' campaigns and who chronically adapt to the most reformist feminist wing of such campaigns.

The attack on access to abortion information is not an isolated occurrence but part of a renewed and general series of attacks on women in recent years. It does not make any sense to limit the campaign *in advance* to a single issue irrespective of the related issues that are repeatedly posed in very concrete ways by events. The campaign must be won to commit itself, as a *necessary* method of broadening its forces, to take up all the concretely posed and related issues such as contraception, sterilisation, sex education etc. These are areas which are not only of vital interest to women in general but of active concern to the activists who make up this campaign and on which open conflict and controversy are inevitable. Are we to forbid the campaign from taking up these issues with all their potential for broadening our forces and impact? Are activists to be exhausted forever trotting back and forth between weak and separate campaigns on closely related issues? This is the implication of the PD group's position.



Photo by Derek Speirs/Report

Yet, in stark contradiction to their practice, the PD's journal argues for the need to link this present campaign to the building of a mass women's movement! PD rejects the need for revolutionary Marxists to *link* every immediate concrete area of struggle faced by women to the general political needs of the mass of women, especially working class women. Instead they blindly exhibit a belief that a mass women's movement, separate from any consideration of *class*, programme or conscious organisation is inevitably straining to emerge within the crisis of imperialist capitalist society today. For PD, the task of 'socialist feminists' is simply to throw the spotlight on immediate single issues as the means of raising 'consciousness' among the mass of women of all classes.

Theirs is a record of 15 years of *imagining* the existence of a 'mass autonomous women's movement' while refusing to fight in the here and now in a way that connects with any perspective of building a real, fighting movement, rooted in the working class and committed to a programme of women's liberation within a perspective of class struggle.

ABSTRACT PROPAGANDISTS

The other *centrist* political group in the campaign, the Socialist Workers Movement, also evades the fight that needs to be begun. It also rejects any public commitment to the demand to repeal the constitutional and legal obstacles to abortion information. Instead they offer the perspective of specifically targeting SPUC by means of a propaganda offensive and militant picketing. Confrontation with SPUC must be one part of the campaign's overall strategy, but it cannot be a *substitute* for a coherent political strategy and tactics to resist the court injunctions and to fight for repeal of the legal

basis for those injunctions. SWM's perspective is rooted in the belief that it is not really possible to struggle concretely against the present anti-woman offensive. For them there is an almost cosmic 'downturn' everywhere and in all struggles, with 'society' being steadily 'pushed to the right' (April issue of SW). For them the fact of hundreds of angry young women crowding into Liberty Hall in the snows of January was just an aberration. Thus the task instead is simply an 'ideological' attack on the ideas of 'the Right'. This campaign of abstract propaganda is thus seen to be prepared for the day when the mysterious 'process' of history turns the downturn into an upswing again. They and PD overlook the fact that while they wait on a climate to spontaneously arise which is favourable to elements of legal reform in the area of sexuality etc., they are in reality handing over the leadership of that future fight in advance to others, such as sections of the middle class

BUILD THE FIGHT IN THE WORKING CLASS

The only sure way to defend the rights that are being snatched away from women now, and to go on then to win the right to choose, is to build a campaign among working class women, especially within the organised labour movement, with the support of all women from other classes who are genuinely prepared to fight, a campaign which can *force* the government to implement its demands. It will be necessary to win the assistance of working class men as well as organised women workers. This will involve a bitter battle against the two-faced labour and trade union leaders.

Although the present campaign has 'committed' itself to work within the unions, its record in this area is somewhat blemished. At the Liberty hall meeting in January a

Trades Council representative pledged the full support of the council for the campaign – yet the council was not even invited to sponsor the subsequent Feb. 7th demonstration! Des Bonass, Trades Council president, pressed by an IWG intervention at Liberty Hall, publicly invited the campaign to carry out speaking tours among the Council's affiliated membership. This was not followed up either. Union declarations of support from officials, even if sincere, are not enough in themselves. The campaign must take the fight into the rank and file and win them to make their unions to take action, especially to pledge all-out support for those who may be victimised for organised defiance of the court injunctions, and to mobilise around the demand for repeal of the legal bases of the ban on information.

Committees to mobilise for defiance of the court ruling must be built in local areas now. They must be based on delegates from the unions and workplaces, drawing in women workers and housewives not previously involved. This will mean getting speakers to union meetings, organising women's caucuses, leafletting workplaces, organising community meetings etc.

ABORTION ON DEMAND

Rather than diplomatically attempt to placate respectable middle class 'allies' by disguising references to 'abortion', this campaign needs to build links with the Northern Ireland abortion campaign, to establish joint action with it and co-operation in the immediate tasks facing both campaigns in defending and advancing women's right to control their fertility. In such cooperation the IWG fights for the perspective of building a movement that can go on to fight for abortion on demand as a free legal and clinically safe provision in Ireland.

Abortion Advice is available by telephone from the Irish Republic – in London at

031 - 251 - 6332

& in Belfast at

084 - 226117

(and from PO Box 44, Belfast BT1 1SH)

AIDS advice is available from Gay Health Action

PO Box 1890

Sherrif Street

Dublin 1

telephone 01 - 710895

AIDS

AIDS is neither a mystery nor a supernatural curse. Its essential features have now been understood for several years – a virus which breaks down the body's ability to combat other infections and diseases, hence its name of *acquired immune deficiency syndrome*, for which there is certainly – given the nature of viruses – a cure yet to be worked out in the laboratories.

However, instead of directing the necessary resources to the need for a cure in a planned way, the stock markets are abuzz with speculators promoting the most profitable treatments of symptoms, while the capitalist media exploit the ugliest prejudices to milk the AIDS epidemic with sensationist lies, and the Irish ruling class bows to clericalist resistance to frank public advice on prevention. The timid education programme of the Coalition has now given way to an overtly church-approved campaign of evading the issues.

EXPLOITING AIDS FEAR

The first cases of AIDS were diagnosed in the US in 1981. Because the disease was initially identified among particular groups in society – predominantly among Haitians and male homosexuals – the immediate assumption was that it was a disease which affected only these groups, depended on them for its transmission, later extended to include drug addicts who shared contaminated needles. The 'deviant' link between AIDS, homosexuality and drug abuse became firmly entrenched. AIDS was a 'Gay plague', a 'punishment from God', a 'moral problem'.

Hostility to homosexuality is nothing new or unusual. Capitalist society encourages countless irrational prejudices in its efforts to sanctify the family as a basic social unit within capitalism. AIDS became proof of the rightness of this position.

Even when examination of the disease in Africa, France and Belgium, revealed that there are more cases among heterosexuals than among Gays, the homophobic hysteria persisted, resulting in the promotion of fear, misinformation and prejudice. And above all – delay.

Already we got a foretaste of what was to come, from the British media in Ireland. The view of the moral majority was given expression by the already notorious John Anderton, Chief Constable of Greater Manchester who spoke of "sexual degenerates swirling about in a human cesspit of their own making", and who said that homosexuals should be 'asked' why they engaged in "obnoxious sexual practices". Then there was the hyped-up story of the airline refusing to employ men as cabin staff because it was claimed that 30% of men

attracted to the job were homosexuals, and since AIDS mainly affected homosexuals the disease could supposedly be spread to passengers if cabin staff cut themselves or had to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

And recently, the new restrictions on entry into the US where immigrants are to be questioned and possibly searched to determine their sexual orientation further underlines Capitalism's anti-gay reaction to the problem that is AIDS.

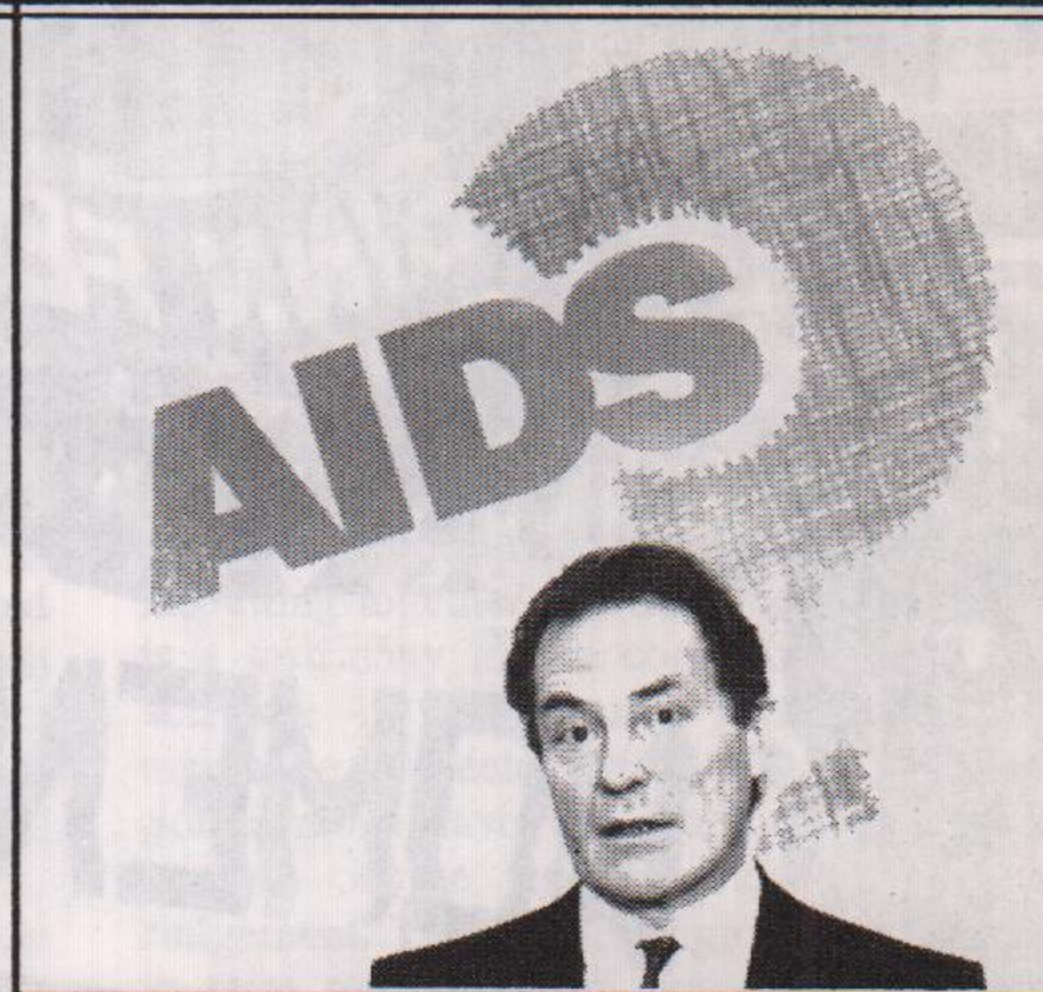
Nor did Ireland escape the hysteria. In December '86, SDLP spokesman on Health, Joe Hendron 'warned' that AIDS was spreading due to the contravention of basic moral principles, "young people are being encouraged to see homosexuality and other deviations as normal and acceptable and the basic principle of marriage and fidelity is being ignored".

In February of this year Dr John Thompson (Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland) said "The church cannot condone homosexuality and must pronounce AIDS as a form of sin if it results from any activity which transgresses the moral code." Further, the teaching of the New Testament showed "that homosexual relationships are not the will of God and because of this cannot be accepted". The Vatican's spokesman Cardinal Josef Ratzinger issued a declaration on homosexuality in which the language used is tantamount to encouraging violence against homosexuals, despite claiming to condemn such violence, stating that we "should not be surprised" when "irrational and violent reactions increase" towards homosexuals when they attempt to secure civil legislation. (*Irish Times* 16/4/87)

And for the catholic bishops the "alarming spread of AIDS" is largely due to consequences of actions which have their roots in moral disorder. "The only reliable safeguard against AIDS is faithfulness to one's marriage partner and self-denial outside marriage".

The media has played its part in furthering the reaction with misinformation. Among the stories carried was one telling us that the Eastern Health Board had received calls claiming that infected blood had been injected into fruit in open markets in Moore Street!

In January the Irish Independent highlighted a story of how two drug addicts supposedly held up a shop and threatened to infect the frightened assistants – by spitting at them – if they didn't hand over the day's takings. The story turned out to be almost entirely false but the message was unmistakable – saliva causes AIDS!



Public Health Enemy No.1. FF Minister Rory O'Hanlon launching AIDS dis-information campaign (Picture : Derek Speirs / Report)

This type of misinformation and scaremongering has had its effects. The president of the Irish branch of the Royal Life Saving Society claims that numbers at life saving classes are dropping off. Church of Ireland members have been warned to be meticulous about cleaning chalices used in communion!

In Mountjoy prison where there was a huge drug problem in the early '80s, as word of AIDS spread, prisoners were tested and those found with HIV positive were moved to a special isolation unit in Arbour Hill. Staff wore rubber gloves all day: food was served on cardboard plates: if a prisoner cut himself warders would appear in space suits and jump over a drop of blood on the floor, so afraid were they that they would catch AIDS.

There has so far been no scientific support for the claim that AIDS can in practice be contracted via saliva, fruit etc. or casual non-sexual contact. In Mountjoy prison the disease was spread mainly by the sharing of infected needles, just as the prison officials knew that hepatitis had previously been spread. It was spread blood-to-blood, aided by the ignorance and desperation of the inmates in the oppressive conditions of the prison. Joe Costello of the Prisoners' Rights Organisation revealed that in Dec. '86 a contaminated needle and syringe had been used by 13 prisoners – some with AIDS antibodies. One of them was Derek Cummins who died a week after the PRO statement.

The consequence of the hysterical reaction is that it has created obstacles to help, education and health programmes. The clearest example of the consequences of delay is the fact that today at least one in three Irish haemophiliacs has AIDS antibodies as a result of receiving infected plasma from abroad. The period in which the disease was contracted from infected preparations was between 1981 and the end of 1986. A halt was finally called when there became available at an 'affordable price' a screening test for each Irish donor of blood, a heat treatment to destroy the AIDS virus and a new plasmapheresis system. But these measures were not introduced until four years after AIDS was identified. This is a clear indictment of the ruling classes who for

HOW TO AVOID AIDS

- (a) Stay with one faithful partner.
- (b) Remain faithful to that partner.
- (c) If in doubt, ask your doctor or clinic about protection through the use of condoms.
- (d) If you inject drugs — don't share needles or equipment.

long time did **nothing** to halt the hysteria by way of information, education or health programmes.

Labour Health Minister Barry Desmond's timid education campaign to prevent AIDS – fidelity as the best way to combat AIDS, with a secondary message of condoms – was shelved in a cowardly manner by the Coalition in order to placate the Catholic clergy in the election period. Since taking power, Fianna Fail Health Minister Rory O'Hanlon welcomed the decision of the Catholic Bishops' Conference to provide pastoral and counselling services on AIDS! He further added that he would be glad of their co-operation in coping with problems posed by the disease.

On the 'international day' of AIDS information in early April the state radio and TV organised some educational, counselling and discussion programmes. The Fianna Fail Health Minister outrageously refused to be interviewed! The Church was strongly represented, however. What received no attention at all was the fundamental question of directing resources to developing a medical cure internationally.

FIANNA FAIL'S CAMPAIGN

On 1st May Haughey's government at last launched the Irish state's 'response' to AIDS. A meagre £250,000 was made available for laboratory facilities for virus testing in general. **Nothing** additional was provided for public health services, treatment or care for victims. Indeed cuts in hospital services reached their most savage level in the same week. But the most contemptible aspect of the campaign was the deliberate evasion of the key issues in the preventive information campaign.

It made no attempt to combat the tendency to combat the tendency to hysteria over AIDS, but preached a simple moralistic message to the most conservative sections of society that they can avoid AIDS by remaining faithful to faithful monogamous partners. But there is **nothing preventive or even informativewith** any concrete relevance for those actually at risk – which includes almost all sexually active persons, especially youth, who are not wholly faithful to one partner, and partners of those already infected by blood transfusion or sexual contact. The use of 'condoms' is posed only in strict conformity with the inquisitorial rules of Roman Catholic moral casuistry – in other words only on the advice of a doctor as a medical need – as an afterthought, for those 'in doubt!' These sectarian confessional slaves to the Catholic bishops haven't even the spine to assert their role as state and government in public education to prevent disease is precisely as a public 'doctor' advising that condoms be used wherever there is a chance of transmitting aids! On the contrary, some of the broadcast ads actually convey the message that condoms are **not a protection!**

The criminal cowardice and hypocrisy of the ruling class, its parties and its bishops, has been underscored at all points, and perhaps nowhere more consistently than by the fact that organised Gays have been the main source of expert advice and counselling, even for the state media, in a society where

homosexuality is stigmatised and outlawed as a crime for males of any age. How can such a state speak to homosexuals directly with regard to hygienic and safer sex? How can it conduct a campaign promoting condoms for all sexually active adults and youths when it makes contraception illegal for the under-18s? How can it advertise at all with regard to sex when its 1985 Family Planning law prohibits any such advertising? And how can it address the needs of pregnant women who are HIV positive when it not only makes abortion illegal but even outlaws the provision of **information** about abortion? These are just some of the concrete problems this capitalist government faces, with its anti-democratic confessional deference to the Catholic Church, which make it impossible for it to begin any campaign of prevention of AIDS.

Combatting AIDS of course poses a real problem for capitalism in general in that it throws up the whole question of looking at sexuality scientifically, publicly and frankly in a way that undermines important aspects of its ideology with regard to the family.

For capitalism's survival the family is essential, providing a steady supply of labour and the maintenance of labour power, reared and cared for by women in the home, performing these tasks as private toil within the family, free gratis and for nothing. Any explicit recognition of sexuality outside the family brings up the thorny questions of socialisation of housework and state provisions for child care, the sick and the old, the cost of which capitalism will never willingly levy on its own vast profits. For this fundamental reason, and for all the ideological edifice of conservatism and control exercised through the family and the oppression of women, monogamy and heterosexuality are presented as 'natural' and any other expression of sexuality as 'deviant'. Thus the vocabulary of abuse – queers, sodomy, whores, promiscuity.

The battle against AIDS can only be fought politically. Gay Health Action and other groups such as organised students, though admirable for their battle to provide the best possible information, will have only a marginal effect on the problem as long as it fails to understand this. GHA has been the main, and for a long time, the only group publishing leaflets and information packs spelling out what AIDS is, how it is transmitted, what the test is and the implications of testing etc., not least in regard to insurance companies who are prominent among the vultures now targetting AIDS 'carriers' for savage discrimination. However their whole approach limits them to a message of individual responsibility – safe sex – whereas fully effective action requires that a fight for political solutions be mobilised around the many related issues, by Gays, other vulnerable groups and sufferers, alongside women organised in progressive struggles, and centrally through the organised working class movement.

As Marxists, and beginning from a class viewpoint, we argue for a struggle to force the disposal of massive funds to be poured into research internationally and in Ireland, to create the medicines and vaccines to prevent, cure and treat AIDS. Why must we wait ten

years while unimaginably greater resources are invested in the weapons of death!

Wellcome, the British drugs company, hopes this summer to be able to produce enough of its AIDS treatment – not a cure, an alleviant – AZT, to treat 10,000 sufferers worldwide. AZT is one of the world's most expensive drugs at about £125 per 1000 pills, with a patient needing 10 pills a day. "In the drug world, treating large numbers of people for life means very big earnings" according to a directory of Wellcome.

It becomes clear why the call for the takeover and nationalisation of drug companies under workers control becomes necessary when you consider the facts that the only alleviant for AIDS is planned to be prohibitively expensive and that this is only one instance of a practice by the drugs companies which see research and manufacture of alleviants for AIDS as more profitable than a cure.

We argue for working class action to provide help for people already in the grip of AIDS – through the best free medical care, counselling and support, and without segregation or ghettoisation in hospitals or elsewhere.

Thirdly, a comprehensive secular and scientific information programme must be launched making all the facts known to people; including how the disease is contracted, spelling out explicitly and in detail the various ways blood and semen can be passed from one human being to another. This is no time for coyness or 'taste'; bluntness and frankness are essential, and that will mean confronting church control in state financed services, in schools and hospitals and also confronting the many church-approved senior medical professionals who may hold back or dilute an information campaign.

We fight for the setting up of special AIDS clinics for testing in every health administration with specially trained staff and client anonymity absolutely guaranteed. We oppose all forms of compulsory testing. The present Sexually Transmitted Disease clinics, which their chief medical spokesman Dr. Friedman has compared to 'cattle markets', must be radically reformed.

We argue for **free sterile needles and syringes** to be made freely available to drug addicts – by far the largest Irish group affected by AIDS.

An education programme, under the inspection and control of health workers and of the most directly affected groups, must be imaginatively and urgently launched so that people cannot fail but assimilate the essential facts, including use of explicit media advertisements and propaganda drama, posters, and leaflets to every home, etc. The GHA, trade unions, women and student organisations must combine in action to force the state to massively fund such a programme.

Simultaneously a fight must be built to force the state to repeal the legal obstacles to effective prevention and humane treatment – especially the **Family Planning Act** limitations on contraceptives and advertising, and the **1861 Offences Against the Person Act** criminalising male homosexual acts and abortion. •

James Connolly and the Protestant Working Class

The last 18 years has seen the grip of loyalism on Ireland's first and most industrially developed proletariat not only unbroken but consolidated. From a successful 'general strike' in 1974 against the British and Irish governments' plans made at Sunningdale, events since have consolidated the power of loyalism to a position today whereby the divisions between Catholic and Protestant workers throughout Ulster exceed those experienced in the 1920s.

Such a situation makes it urgent to reassess the history and development of the protestant working class, its place and role in Irish capitalist society today. Only if this task is successfully achieved can revolutionary socialists programmatically address the problem of the tactics necessary to win the majority of protestant workers to the struggle for an Irish workers' state and international socialism. For there can be little doubt that unless this goal is reached they will remain a bastion of reaction for imperialist capitalism, and as events throughout the 19th and 20th centuries have so tragically demonstrated, a deadly road block in the path of the proletarian revolution in Ireland.

This final article in our present series on James Connolly, is devoted to an evaluation of Connolly's understanding of the protestant working class. Ireland's first and greatest socialist was forced through circumstances to turn his attention more and more to the issue, especially in his second period in Ireland at the time of the emergence of the Home Rule Bill of 1911. The extent of the divisions between Catholics and Protestants, which Connolly had always been aware of as a historic legacy of colonialism, became more sharply defined in this period, and also brought out crucial differences among the tiny band of socialists in the North.

In this article we shall examine the understanding of the origins and nature of the protestant working class which Connolly had developed before going to Belfast and which has remained characteristic of the 'Connolly tradition' since.

As with much else in Connolly's legacy, critical scholarship on Connolly's attempts to grapple with the nature and roots of loyalist ideology has refused to follow through fully the consequences for his Marxism of the very obvious shortcomings of his analyses. Even in the most comprehensive critical evaluation to date, Bernard Ransom's positive insights on the question are squandered because of his determination to interpret Connolly's errors and distortions as a successful contribution to a distinctive 'hibernicised' Marxism.

Revolutionary socialists in Ireland and elsewhere, although able to draw from the rich theoretical and programmatic legacy of Bolshevism on the question of imperialism, continue to evade the challenges of confronting Connolly's legacy on the matter – maintaining, as a blind article of faith that his position is essentially Lenin's theory of a labour aristocracy. Nothing could be further from the truth as we shall show.

CONNOLLY'S MARXISM

This series on Connolly has developed a number of key and interrelated propositions about the distinctive components of Connolly's Marxism. Central to it is Connolly's theory of Irish history, a theory which amounted to a complete inversion of the classical Marxist theory of the nation. For Connolly the national struggle in Ireland was defined by what he wrongly believed to have been the real nature of the Anglo Norman conquest – the expropriation of a communal, egalitarian clan society by a foreign system of feudal private property which later evolved into mature capitalist property relations.

For Connolly, therefore, the Irish national struggle was in essence a struggle to recover communal property forms – which meant a socialist society. Thus Connolly's *populist* revision of Marxism enabled him to cast both the clan-chiefs and the plebeian toiling masses as authentic freedom fighters in the period from the 12th century until 1691. After this, when the conquest was finally sealed, the only true "patriots" and bearers of that legacy were those whose social interest was bound up with the ending of private property – the working class. In this perspective no role exists for the Irish bourgeoisie in history except that of apostate, since its social and political goals were the consolidation and development of private property in Ireland.

As we illustrated, Connolly's schema compelled him to tortuously rescript the role of the bourgeoisie in Irish history, especially its heroic and revolutionary representatives of the 18th and 19th centuries. Wolfe Tone is added to the pantheon of the precursors of socialism. The later Fenian nationalists and Irish Republican Brotherhood are presented as embryonic socialists.

This major revision of classical Marxism was connected with a qualitative revision of the Marxist materialist explanation of religion and its role in the historical development of concrete social formations and the struggle of social classes. For Marx and Engels, religion has its origins in the historical development of the material

forces of production and its functions as part of the class-bound forms of society which have grown up in history. It is an inverted consciousness, an ideology, which expresses while simultaneously disguising the real material and social foundations of exploitation and oppression in all class-divided society. But while this is true of all religion as a social phenomenon, however, the role of specific religions in history can only be understood as part of the social and material contribution made by specific social classes in history, within definite social conditions, to the overall development of the productive forces of humanity.

CONNOLLY'S IRISH HISTORY

This was not Connolly's approach. In the first article in this series we saw that his conscious rejection of the methods of historical materialist enquiry deeply flawed and seriously compromised his ability to apply Marxism to the complex and changing nature of Irish social structure. His theory of Irish history, therefore, compounded his false understanding of the nature and role of catholicism in Ireland. Catholicism in Europe, he argued correctly, was the reactionary consciousness of the hierarchical feudal lordship. But in Connolly's view catholicism in Ireland was on the contrary the spontaneous expression of the moral sentiment of the organic community, the sept. Like the 'Irish community' itself, Irish catholicism became subordinated to the anti-democratic bureaucratic spirit and organisation of the pro-English (and pro-capitalist) authoritarian church.

Furthermore, as the national struggle in Connolly's schema was simultaneously 'a class struggle', the continued loyalty of the plebeian masses throughout history to their Irish faith represented for him evidence for an expression of the healthy collective values as against the alien values of private property, 'individualism' and 'materialism'.

This perspective was to have major consequences for his understanding of 'protestantism' in Irish history. Connolly's eviction of the Irish bourgeoisie from its role as the historic subject of the national revolution is directly related to his exceptionalist theory of Irish catholicism. But also, as we have argued throughout this series, both views amounted to the theoretical basis for his failure to develop a scientific programme, strategy or tactics that could have avoided adapting to nationalism and catholicism as his politics increasingly did in Connolly's final period in Ireland, both in Belfast and in Dublin. It is this theoretical perspective that explains his failure to

develop a real understanding of the protestant working class and its adherence to loyalism.

"I believe that it is true to say that politically speaking, the protestantism of the North East has no parallel outside this country, and that the Catholicism of the Irish Catholics is likewise peculiar in its political trend" (*Ireland on the Dissecting Table*)

Connolly's schematic and metaphysical rendering of Irish history as a constant struggle for the realisation (recovery) of an indigenous class-less nation severely restricts the scope of his enquiries into the complexity and periodisation of the Irish social formation and its development after the Norman invasion. By the period of the Anglo Norman influx the Irish social formation already represented an indigenous feudalism, weak compared to its European counterparts, and ultimately, if unevenly, incorporated into the Anglo Norman lordship. But by interpreting the conflict between two feudal entities as a class struggle for the Irish 'nation' Connolly fails to grasp the implications and significance of the invasion and of the changing nature of English rule in Ireland. These changes were brought about by the slow emergence and then the break-up of absolutism from the War of the Roses up to Cromwell and the Williamite coup in England. It is in this period crucially we see the real significance of protestantism, and its part in the development of merchant capitalist social relations and the market.

ENGLISH ABSOLUTISM AND IRISH CAPITALISM

As Marxism classically understands it, absolutism represented the effort of a threatened nobility to reorganise the basis of its state power after the breakdown of serfdom, the rise of towns and the dissolution of local economy. Regional power tended to be replaced by a centralised state (of an emergent nation) represented by the absolute monarch. On the one hand this absolutist state sought to maintain feudalism by preventing the separation of manufacturing production from the land (a precondition of capitalist production). On the other hand, it helped to further dissolve feudalism by creating a unified and centralised state and superstructure, which aided the rise of merchant capital. Absolutism, then, carried out certain necessary functions of primitive accumulation which was a crucial early historic stage in the emergence of the modern industrial capitalist system.

The complete subjugation of native feudalism and the policy of systematic colonisation in Ireland from the early 17th century absorbed Ireland into the developing modern capitalist world system mainly through Ireland's relationship with England and its emerging capitalist economy. It is in this period crucially that the contribution to that overall process of the ideology of protestantism must be assessed.

As we have seen above, and in other articles, Connolly was aware of the general Marxist assessment and judgement of the role of catholicism in the period of feudal decline as a reactionary one. In Ireland, however, he argued it was in essence progressive, underneath its modern bureaucratic and

hierarchical forms. Such a reading of Irish history could only lead to an equally exceptionalist account of Irish protestantism. Writing in 1913 he argues:

"to explain — I mean that whereas Protestantism has in general made for political freedom and political radicalism it has been opposed to slavish worship of kings and aristocrats. Here in Ireland the word Protestant is almost a convertible term with Toryism, lickspittle loyalty, servile worship of aristocracy and hatred of all that savours of genuine political independence on the part of the lower classes". (*Catholicism, Protestantism and Politics. Forward, May 3rd 1913*).

PROTESTANTISM

And earlier, in his debate with Father Kane in 1909, linking the seizure of the monasteries in England with the conquest of Ireland:

"How do the Catholic clergy dare to defend the possessors in the present possession of their stolen property when they publicly proclaim from the altar their knowledge of the inhuman crimes against God and man by which that property passed out of the hands of Church and people? The reformation was the capitalist idea appearing in the religious field; as capitalism teaches that the social salvation of man depends solely upon his own individual effort, so Protestantism, echoing it, taught that the spiritual salvation of man depends solely upon his own individual appeal to God; as capitalism abolished the idea of social interdependence which prevailed under feudalism, and made men isolated units in a warring economic world, so Protestantism abolished the independent links of priests, hierarchy and pontiffs which in the Catholic system unites man with his Creator, and left man at the mercy of his own interpretations of warring texts and theories. In fine, as capitalism taught the doctrine of every man for himself, and by its growing power forced such doctrines upon the ruling class it created its reflex in the religious world, and that reflex, proclaiming that individual belief was the sole necessity of salvation, appears in history as the Protestant Reformation. Now, the Church curses the Protestant Reformation — the child; and blesses capitalism — its parent." (*Labour, Nationality and Religion, New Books, p.58*)

Here Connolly correctly acknowledges the role of protestantism in the development of capitalism in the period of the reformation, but he omits anywhere to recognise this as a progressive development and even inverts its actual significance to fit the tenets of his schematic reading of Irish historical development from the period of the rise of Absolutism onwards. He achieves this by identifying protestantism with capitalism and its values of 'individualism' and 'materialism'. Since capitalism and its values are alien, Connolly can see protestantism as an alien system of religious belief, one synonymous with the conquest. As the quotation from his debate with Kane illustrates, Connolly is forced, from such a position, to interpret the dissolution of the monasteries and the seizure of the property of the feudal catholic church by Henry VIII as nothing more than a

regrettable expression of capitalist individualism. Such an understanding inevitably reflects Connolly's failure to develop a method which could have unravelled from a materialist standpoint the real significance of Protestantism for the economic, social and political processes in Ireland from the 15th to the 18th century.

COLONIAL SYSTEM

For Marx an understanding of English absolutism and its protestant religion in Ireland flows from his understanding of the development of capitalism in England. Of that Marx wrote:

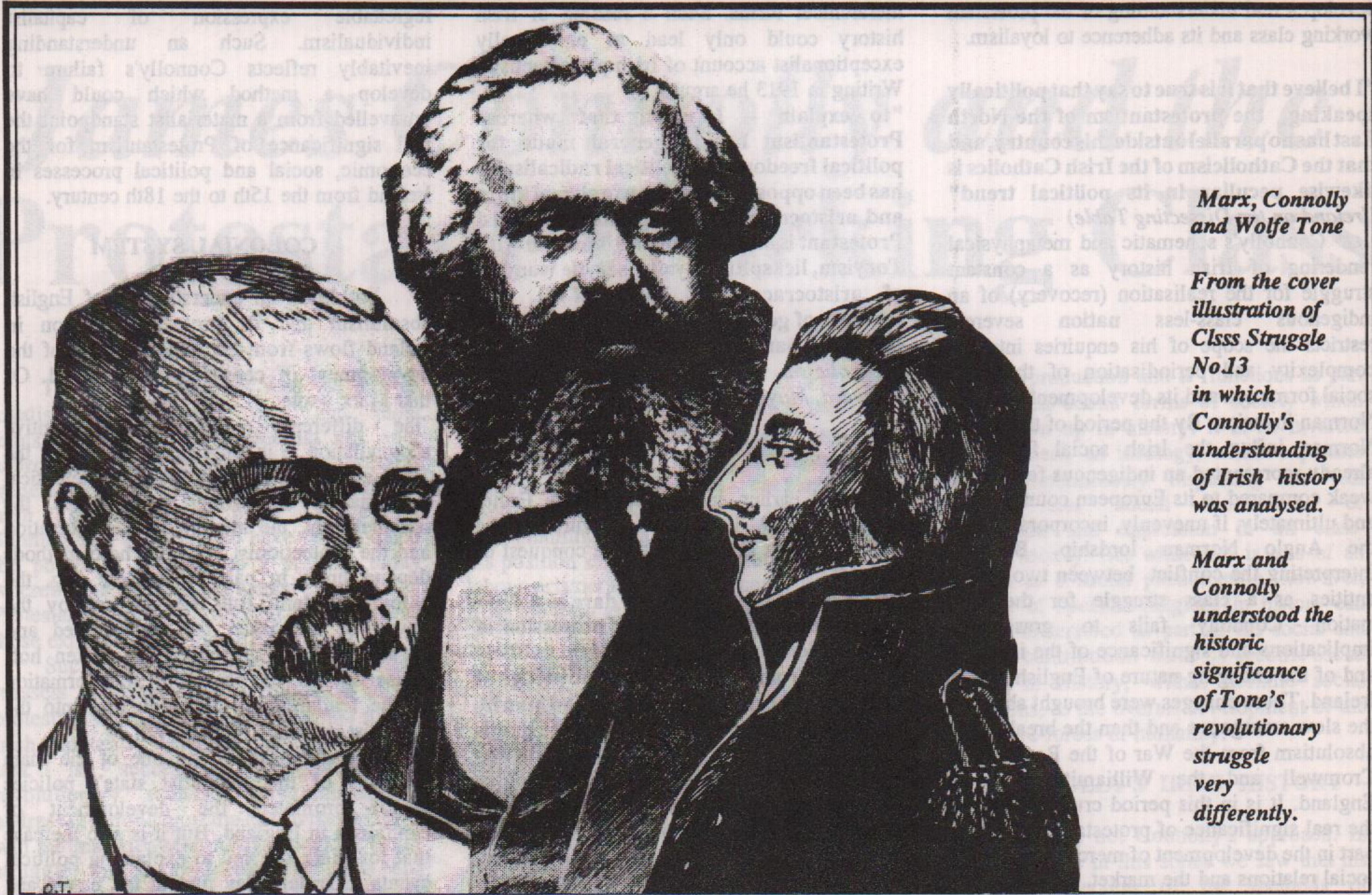
"the different *momenta* of primitive accumulation ... in England at the end of the 17th century ... arrive at a systematical combination embracing the colonies, the national debt, the modern mode of taxation and the protectionist system. These methods depend upon in part brute force, e.g. the colonial system. But they all employ the power of the State, the concentrated and organised force of society, to hasten hot-house fashion, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode..." (*Capital Vol 1*)

So, colonisation was one of the main elements of the absolutist state's policies which promoted the development of capitalism in England. But it is also the case that for Marx the key to explaining political events in Ireland lay first in the nature and purpose of the struggles within the English feudal nobility as the process of Absolutism develops, and then, secondly, through the expanding penetration of merchant and commercial capital, in a growing conflict as the new forces and mode of capitalist production emerges.

Connolly's position is different. In both *Erin's Hope* where he concentrates on the period 1169-1649, and in *Labour in Irish History (LIH)* which deals with both the Jacobite wars and 1691-1900, it is abundantly clear that he lacked Marx's framework and insights into the significance of Absolutism for Ireland. In neither does he give any detailed analyses of what is, in his schematic, a key period in Irish history, 1169-1649. It is simply described as "war against the foreign oppressor" and a war against "private property".

No distinction is drawn between the periods before and after the War of the Roses. Yet it was on the basis of victory in that war that the Tudor kings established a state which both desired to and needed to transform its own role in Ireland. From that point on, the varying forms of attack on Irish feudal property and the transfer of landownership in the 16th and early 17th century are increasingly expressions of the establishment and interests of the absolute Tudor monarchy. In avoiding any explanation of these phenomena Connolly avoids linking the resurgence of English interest in Ireland under the Tudors to the process of primitive accumulation in England. A central part of this was, of course, the expropriation of Catholic Church lands and the establishment of the Protestant Church of England.

Therefore, the spread of Protestantism in Ireland, and especially the spread of radical presbyterianism, which was one result of the



**Marx, Connolly
and Wolfe Tone**

*From the cover
illustration of
Class Struggle
No.13
in which
Connolly's
understanding
of Irish history
was analysed.*

*Marx and
Connolly
understood the
historic
significance
of Tone's
revolutionary
struggle
very
differently.*

systematic Irish plantations embarked upon by the Tudors and Stuarts, has a historically progressive character. It represents one vital element of the process whereby the feudal mode of production in Ireland, as in England, was increasingly subordinated to the process of accumulation of capital and, by the 18th century, to the rising interests of the merchant and industrial bourgeoisie. This is not to say, of course, that the process was progressive through and through. It was Marx who more than once made the point that the bourgeoisie, right from its first successful seizure of state power from the feudal aristocracy in the Cromwellian revolution, combined bourgeois revolution in Britain with murder, dispossession and persecution of native and Anglo-Norman Irish as part of Cromwell's Irish wars and plantations. That is, the liberation of Britain through bourgeois revolution had as its penumbra the greater enslavement of the Irish.

We can thus summarise the general problem with protestantism in Ireland which arises for Connolly because of his general revision of the Marxist approach to Irish history. In contrast to Marx's extended explanations in Capital Vol.1 and elsewhere (*Ireland and the Irish Question* p.133), Connolly is unable to recognise that Absolutism's desire for land in Ireland is linked to the complex process of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. He cannot, therefore, develop a materialist approach to the place of religion in this process as it expressed itself in Ireland. Without such a framework, which relates ideological forms to their role in the development of the forces of production and the struggle of social classes, Connolly, through his economic reductionist reading of

events increasingly resorts to explaining the role of religion as no more than a conspiratorial ideological device used by the ruling classes to dupe the plebeian toilers. This finds expression in Connolly's various accounts of Ulster history.

STUART REACTION

Thus in the Ulster Plantation and the Jacobite wars of 1689-91 – in his view merely a feud between two factions of the English feudal aristocracy in Ireland – religion (and patriotism) are only seen to be cynically employed to mobilise the soldiery and support for the respective monarchs (*LIH* p.7). A Marxist account recognises these wars as being fought in Ireland for the control of the British state: the key role of religion could only be located and understood in relation to the different social and class interests of both Ulster Protestant planters and the Irish Catholic aristocracy in relation to the overall process of class struggles of the commercial and merchant capitalist interests against reactionary Stuart absolutism. Marx describes:

"the fear felt among the new great landowners created by the Reformation of the re-establishment of Catholicism, in which case they would, of course, have to surrender all their stolen church property, as a result of which seven-tenths of the total acreage of England would have changed owners; the fear of Catholicism felt by the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, since it by no means suited their business interests; the nonchalance with which the Stuarts, to their own advantage and that of their court nobility, sold the whole of English industry and commerce to the

government of France – the only country which at that time was endangering England with its competition, in many respects successfully". (*Surveys from Exile, Péguin*, p.253-254)

The re-establishment of Catholicism had become, in this description, the issue in the fight over which the fate of English capitalist development would be decided.

While Connolly acknowledges the connection between the Jacobite wars and "English politics" (*LIH*, p.10), he does not grasp the real processes and issues involved, and he cannot identify the special significance and contribution of religion to them. Both Catholicism and Protestantism are, for Connolly, mobilised to confuse the masses; whereas for Marx religion must be understood in these conflicts as an active and meaningful factor in explaining how different classes and fractions of classes understood their social interests and pursued them.

Following that, bourgeois market-relations and interests expanded and deepened in England, and also in Ireland. Within the ruling alliance Ireland was a stronghold of the landowners, and the extra strength they drew from Ireland was to have serious repercussions for the balance of power within the English ruling class. Meanwhile both in Ireland and in England, with the smashing of the Stuart absolutist party catholicism slowly ceased through the 18th century to represent the ideology of that reactionary alliance of monarchy and aristocracy. By the end of the 18th century many of the anti-Catholic measures would have lost the economic and political significance they had in the early years of the Penal Laws.

Connolly never develops such an analysis. As a consequence he further ignores

the crucial significance of the alliance of the planted Ulster Protestants with the bourgeois revolutionaries of Cromwellian England. Ulster's plantation in the first decades of the 17th century had marked differences from the other plantations either earlier or later. Not only in the humbler socio-economic status of the colonists, the relative smallness of their settlements – none more than 2,000 acres – their strong adherence to the precepts and 'democratic' organisation of anti-Anglican Presbyterianism; but also and vitally important, is the fact that they had developed by the mid-17th century the most advanced core area of domestic linen production in Ireland. As de Paor notes:

"the industry and skills of the settlers, many of whom were of urban origin [caused it] to be distinguished by a flourishing of craftsmanship not to be found to the same extent elsewhere". (*Divided Ulster* p.10)

Thus in Ulster alongside a native peasant-based economy emerged a small farmer economy geared towards petty commodity production in domestic textiles: a development which reflected and deepened the process of class, regional and ideological differentiation in Ireland, i.e. uneven and combined development. This was the concrete form taken by the intensification of the grip of merchant and commercial capitalisation of Ireland. This explains the historically progressive support of Ulster Protestants for Cromwell and his puritans whose victory in the English civil war ensured the effective destruction of the absolute monarchy and the partial break-up of its Catholic base in Ireland.

The Cromwellian settlement involved crucially significant features for the future path of development and the complexity of the Irish social structure. First, the forced transfer of the Catholic aristocracy (who had supported the Royalist cause) to the west, thereby further accelerating the rhythm of uneven spatial development. Second, their replacement by the new English and Scottish landowners everywhere but in Ulster, whose share of land from 1640-1688 almost doubled to 78 per cent – creating in the process a new landowning Irish ascendancy as a right wing to the British ruling class. Thirdly, the introduction into Ireland on a hitherto unprecedented scale, of merchant capitalist adventurer companies and their speculative activities in land, which in turn meant that the land increasingly took the form of a commodity.

For Connolly, on the contrary, the nature of the plantation in Ulster assumed no special significance for the development of either capitalist property relations in the 17th, 18th or 19th centuries, or, as we shall see below, for an understanding of the role of Orangeism in the period of industrial capitalism. As far as he was concerned, it was just one more aspect of the expropriation of the 'real' Irish from their lands, thus consolidating two-fold foreign property and cultural relations – private property and Protestantism.

Such a situation can only, Connolly argues, have contributed to the conspiratorial manipulation of religion by the ruling classes as a means to divide the plebeian masses.

"I have pointed out before that the Ulster plantation of James I was a scheme (sic)

under which lands stolen from the natives were given to certain crown favourites and London companies and that the rank and file of the Protestant English and Scottish armies were only made tenants of these aristocrats and companies ... All the Antrim lands were settled by a Protestant tenantry ... they worked hard, reclaimed the land, built houses, drained, fenced and improved the property ..." (*Labour in Irish History, New Books*, p.39)

and again:
"If the north east corner of Ireland is therefore the home of a people whose minds are saturated with conceptions of political activity fit only for the atmosphere of the 17th century ... the fault lies not with these toilers but with those pastors and masters who deceived it and enslaved it in the past ... and deceived it in order that they might enslave it" (our emphasis) (*NEast Ulster, Forward, 2 August 1913, in Socialism and Nationalism collection* p.103).

THE 18th CENTURY

– Epoch of the Irish Bourgeoisie –

Connolly did not grasp the material connections between Protestantism and the complexity and complexion of developing class, regional and ethnic identity in Ireland from the 16th century onwards. In the period of the 18th century onwards, when capitalist social relations increasingly dictated the lines of this class struggle. This failure is critical for an understanding of his attempts to relate to the Protestant workers in the 20th century. In the 18th century, as we illustrated at length in the seminal article of our series, *Connolly and Irish History – Class Struggle No. 15*. Connolly's schematic identification of "labour" as the only real embodiment of the Irish nation led him to refuse to concede the emergence of an indigenous patriotic capitalism. The most that he could accept was that the 'implanted' capitalism became by the 18th century 'disloyal' to the crown because of legislation restricting trade. Inevitably, he argued, it later re-assumed, as had earlier bogus patriots like the Anglo-Norman landlords etc., its role as a loyal subject to British capitalist interests.

'... with the close of that war industries developed so quickly in the country as to become a menace to the capitalists of England, who accordingly petitioned the King of England to restrict and fetter their growth, which he accordingly did. With the passing of this restrictive legislation against Irish industries, Irish capitalism became discontented and disloyal without, as a whole, the power of courage to be revolutionary. It was a re-staging of the ever-recurring drama of English invasion and Anglo-Irish disaffection, with the usual economic background. We have pointed out in a previous chapter how each generation of English adventurers settling upon the soil as owners, resented the coming of the next generation, and that their so-called Irish patriotism was simply inspired by the fear that they should be dispossessed in their turn as they had dispossessed others. What applies to the landowning "patriots" applies also to the manufacturers. The Protestant capitalists with the help of the English, Dutch and other adventurers dispossessed

the native Catholics and became prosperous; as their commerce grew it became a serious rival to that of England, and accordingly the English capitalists compelled legislation against it, and immediately the erstwhile "English garrison in Ireland" became an Irish "patriot party".' (our emphasis) (*L.I.H., p.50 New Books*)

Connolly was fundamentally wrong, of course. As we wrote: "The developing bourgeoisie of the 18th century, in Ireland as elsewhere represented the interests of the new developing mode of production which was necessarily pitched into opposition against feudal, semi-feudal, colonial barriers where it met them. The Irish capitalist class may have been, indeed was, at a great disadvantage but it was, nevertheless, the rise of this class that provided the conditions for a modern movement for a democratic revolution and the appetite for ideas as were beamed out from the American and French revolutionary ferment". (*Class Struggle, No. 15, p. 15*)

For Connolly, however, the key point of the 18th century was that: "The Protestant and Catholic tenants were suffering one common oppression ... To the vast mass of the population the misery and hardship entailed by the working out of economic laws were fraught with infinitely more suffering than it was at any time within the power of the Penal Law to inflict" (*L.I.H. p.13*)

Here, under the appearance of religious differences class divisions between owners of property and labourers were the truly significant dividing line: "Class lines ... were far more strictly drawn than religious lines as they always were in Ireland since the break-up of the clan system and as they are today" (*L.I.H. p.33*)

BOURGEOIS PATRIOTS

The significance of this characteristically economic reductionist interpretation, liberally supported by accounts of plebeian struggles against property resides in Connolly's need to explain the emergence of Grattan's Volunteers and later the United Irishmen. Within his scheme it is 'labour', as the material and ethical embodiment of the nation which alone can realise freedom. Clearly the real events of the 19th century challenge this view and the method underlying it. Thus Connolly is forced to summarily dispatch all the representatives of the ascendancy and the bourgeoisie who in any way identify with the struggle for independence against the British state. The democratic demands of native capital are not recognised.

"The patriots who occupied the public stage in Ireland during the period ... never once raised their voices in protest at such social injustice [against labourers and peasants] Like their imitators today they regarded the misery of the Irish people as a convenient handle for political agitation ..." (*L.I.H. p.20-21*)

and:
"The Irish parliament was essentially an English institution; nothing like it existed before the Norman Conquest ... England sent a swarm of adventurers to conquer Ireland; having partly succeeded these adventurers

themselves established a parliament to settle disputes among themselves to contrive measures for robbing the natives, and to prevent their fellow tyrants who had stayed in England from claiming the spoil." (LIH p21)

Even the claim, popular in his period among nationalists, that the legislative independence and free trade won by the volunteers and Grattan's parliament occasioned a growth in prosperity and economic expansion, is strongly rejected by Connolly: "We must emphatically deny that such prosperity was in any way but an infinitesimal degree produced by Parliament" (LIH p.26), and "not that the loss of Parliament destroyed Irish manufacture but that the decline of Irish manufacture made possible the destruction of the Irish parliament" (LIH p26 & 31)

Having disposed, in accordance with the imperatives of his 'system', with the roles and motives of the reforming ascendancy or bourgeois reformers, Connolly is equally driven to suppress the real economic, social and political goals of the leaders of the revolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie which emerged from the reform movement. As a consequence, the significance of their religion to their class interest is never understood.

As we wrote in CS No. 15, p17: "In this manner, Connolly despatches the Irish capitalist class as a whole and redefines the whole subsequent period up to 1798 as the convergence of the worker and peasant of Catholic and Protestant religions, independent of and in opposition to indigenous capitalism and all propertied interests, under the banner of a democratic independent Republic in which the social question of the real producers would be solved".

CLASS DEMOCRACY

Connolly is constrained to ignore the origins of Tone's United Irishmen in the series of political and economic developments which led the most militant advocates of change from their initial position of support for reform (and loyalty to the Crown) to their final position of revolutionary bourgeois republicanism. He distorts the real significance of the economic conflict between the British and Irish propertied classes by simply not recognising that the underlying economic purpose of their democratic struggle was to open a path for the development of native Irish capitalism. So he merely notes: "The development of industry has drawn large numbers of the Protestant poor from agricultural pursuits into industrial occupations and the suppression of these latter left them both landless and workless" (This 'suppression' refers to British measures and economic competition.) Thus:

"the Protestant workman and tenant was learning that the Pope of Rome was a very unreal and shadowy stranger compared with the social power of his employer or landlord; and the Catholic tenant was awakened to the perception of the fact that under the social order the Catholic landlord represented the Mass less than the rent roll. The times were propitious for a union of the two democracies of Ireland. They had travelled

from widely different points through the valleys of disillusion and disappointment to meet at last by the unifying waters of a common suffering." (LIH p.53)

Thus the democratic programme is emptied of its actual economic and class significance. It is rather against this background, we are told, that the United Irish leaders, galvanised by the model of the French Revolution, emerge to express a popular will for democracy and sovereignty by taking their stand on two things:

"The national will was superior to property rights and would abolish them at will" and "the producing class could not be expected to rally to the democratic revolution unless given to understand that it meant their freedom from social as well as political bondage" (LIH p.66)

It is here that Connolly definitely welcomes the Protestant working class – minus its religion, of course, to the ranks of "labour" to join in labour's appointed role as agent of 'reconquest'. To do so, however, he is compelled to tortuously ignore the real meaning and significance of the social, economic and political developments of 18th century Ireland. And what's more, he is compelled to deny any significance to the role of religion in all of these events. Social, economic and spatial differentiation, between and within developing modes and factors of production – involving conflicts between Landlords and tenants, landlords and bourgeoisie, bourgeoisie and independent producers, bourgeoisie and workers, agricultural labourers and cottiers etc., and their specific ideological forms – are all flattened out to arrive at the preconceived identification of "labour" and "nation" in the revolutionary events at the end of the 18th century.

We are left with no means, therefore, to grasp the significance of the fact that while it was presbyterian manufacturers and merchants in Belfast who led tens of thousands of presbyterian tenant farmers of Antrim in the '98 revolution, it was cottier weaver (protestant Church of Ireland) Anglicans – Orangemen – of the Ulster countryside around Armagh and south Down who crushed them. In order to understand these facts we need to see the relationship of the competing social classes to the process of change and development in Ulster as the early

Resolutions of the Ulster Volunteers

"At a Meeting of the Representatives of One Hundred and Forty Three Corps of Volunteers of the Province of Ulster, held at Dungannon, on Friday the 15th day of February, 1782.

Colonel William Irvine, in the Chair.

"Whereas it has been asserted that Volunteers, as such, cannot with propriety debate or publish their opinions on political subjects, or on the conduct of Parliament, or public men,

"Resolved unanimously, That a citizen by learning the use of arms, does not abandon any of his civil rights.

"Resolved unanimously, That a claim of any body of men other than the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, is unconstitutional, illegal, and a grievance.

"Resolved (with one dissenting voice only), That the powers exercised by the Privy Council of both kingdoms, under, or under colour, or pretence of, the law of Poyning's, are unconstitutional, and a grievance.

"Resolved unanimously, That the ports of this country, are by right open to all foreign countries, not at war with the King, and that any burthen thereupon or obstruction thereto, save only by the Parliament of Ireland, are unconstitutional, illegal, and a grievance.

"Resolved (with two dissenting voices only to this and the following resolution) That we hold the right of private judgement in matters of Religion, to be equally sacred in others as in ourselves.

"Resolved therefore, That as men, and as Irishmen, as Christians, and as Protestants, we rejoice in the relaxation of the Penal Laws against our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, and that we conceive the measure to be fraught with the happiest consequences to the union and prosperity of the inhabitants of Ireland.

[From the resolutions of the Dungannon Convention, representing 25,000 Volunteers in Ulster, in the Presbyterian meeting House at Dungannon. Charlemont, Grattan and Flood drafted the resolutions in advance]

momentum of capitalist industrialisation gathers pace.

ULSTER ECONOMY UP TO 1798

As we have outlined above it is necessary to begin with the perspective and interests of the British state after the Williamite 'Glorious Revolution'. The state was dominated by the Whig landed Aristocracy who were committed to the protection of existing industry and the defence of British trading (what Marx calls 'merchant') capital, against the emergence of an Irish rival.

"The primary purpose of the British state in controlling Ireland in the 18th century lay in ensuring the implementation of mercantilist policies promoting English commerce, and to prevent any possible alliance between Irish merchants and the landed ascendancy in Ireland. This meant strengthening the Established Church, and to ensure state control of the judiciary to gain control over land titles." (Marx, in 1869, in *Ireland and the Irish Question* p.169)

Mercantilist policies (i.e. taxes and other state policies to promote English industry), as they had developed in the 18th century, reinforced the tendency of the Irish economy to orientate to the needs of the British economy. In the period from 1650-1750 the Irish landlord and merchant bourgeoisie on most of the island ceased to be, for all intents and purposes, potential competitors with their neighbours. Ireland became within that period an agricultural province supplying cheap food and labour for

the growing industrial market of England.

LINEN

Only in one sector was economic growth of Irish manufacturing fostered and developed – in linen where no competition could be offered, as England possessed no comparable industry. Through the 18th century the export of linen became the single most important item of trade – by 1720 it accounted for over one half of all exports to England. In 1700 half a million yards were exported but by 1800 the figure had reached 38 million yards. Clearly the main external reason for its growth was the existence of a rapidly expanding market to which Irish linens had duty-free entry. By the end of the 18th century the industry existed all over the country in the hands of merchants with no interest other than to supply the English market.

Only in Ulster did control of the industry rest in the hands of the direct producers themselves. It is this that provides the key to an understanding of both the drive towards mechanised factory production in both linen and cotton, the emergence in Ulster of a manufacturing and radicalising bourgeoisie and simultaneously of a force among the cottier weaver class in reaction against these developments

ULSTER'S DIFFERENCE

As argued above, the primary significance of the Plantation in Ulster lay in the type of agriculture it established, proving conducive to the development of domestic handicraft linen industry. In general domestic industry, prior to the development of the factory system required the existence of a peasantry independently possessing a dwelling and a source of subsistence. Marx explains the nature of this mode of production:

"It attains its classical form only where the labourer is the private owner of his means of labour set in action by himself ... This mode of production presupposes parcelling of the soil, and scattering of the other means of production. As it excludes the concentration of these means of production, so it also excludes cooperation, division of labour within each separate process of production, the control over the productive application of the forces of nature by society, and the free development of the social production process ... at a certain stage it brings forth the material agency for its own dissolution" (Marx, *Capital Vol 1*, Lawrence & Wishart, p.761-2)

This is the type of manufacturing system which intensified its growth in Ulster in the first 70 years of the 18th century (and which, as Kennedy has pointed out, remained in parts of Ulster well into the latter half of the 19th century (*The Rural Economy*, by L.Kennedy, in *Ulster an Economic History*, Ollenshaw & Kennedy). Taking advantage of the British market and increasingly attracting financial support from the landlords, its development hastened a process of social, cultural, economic and regional differentiation of Ulster from the rest of Ireland, which would culminate in the period of mature industrial capitalism in the second half of the

19th century.

One of the most important effects of the 18th century growth of this mode of production was its effect on merchant capital. A weak merchant capital had existed in Ireland in the 16th century. During the 17th century merchant capital all over the island depended on local trade and importing consumer goods for the local landowners, administrators, the Army and the Established Church, while exporting limited amounts of wool and foodstuffs. These developments continued into the 18th century, when, with the increasing growth of commercial agriculture and a merchant capital allied with the producers, conflict developed with feudal agricultural forms and relations as well as with the British state in Ireland which supported them.

EXPROPRIATION OF DIRECT PRODUCERS

But it was in relation to the linen and cotton industry that merchant capital began to emerge increasingly freed from dependence on agriculture. As they developed merchants became less dependent on landlords because the local markets grew extensively on the basis of trade with England. In the linen industry merchants began to overlap increasingly with bleachers, the final most capital intensive aspect of the industry, and the stage with the most fruitful promise of capital accumulation. One important indication of these changes occurred when alternative Linen Halls were built in Newry and Belfast, to break the Dublin-based state Linen Board monopoly of the export trade. The concentration of capital in the hands of these merchants led to the increasing mechanisation and capitalisation first of cotton production and later linen production, as market forces and competition intensified. Concentration of capital, mechanisation and intensified competition led in turn to the expropriation of the previously independent and domestic producers in Ulster. Part of this expropriation was well under way by the 1780s with the deliberate introduction of Catholics into the industry – previously excluded due to lack of capital and tradition – in order to sharpen competition and lower the wages of the protestant spinners and weavers.

Here we witness the two-fold dialectical process central to Marx's classical theory of capitalist development – the sharpening of competition and market forces leading to the gradual separation of the immediate producers from their means of production. Simultaneously, because of the increasingly available "free" labour power, land and capital and other means of production could be combined in the most profitable manner in mechanised factory production.

Connolly had correctly observed the results of these processes at work in Ulster but concluded, as we have demonstrated, that they heralded the beginning of the end for private property in 1798. In fact they signified only the first stage, the end of the beginning of capitalist private property. On one side in this process as it emerged in Ulster by the last quarter of the 18th century were the Anglican rural cottier weavers' class, while on the other were the newly expanding presbyterian urban manufacturing

bourgeoisie. Only within the framework of the material basis of their conflict, as two social forces connected at different parts to the objective process of capital accumulation, can the specific role of ideology – presbyterian and (anglican) 'orange' – be understood in this period. It is only through an understanding of the outcome of their conflict – the political defeat of the urban bourgeoisie and their economic subordination to the dynamic industrialisation of British colonial capitalism – that we can explain the 19th century conversion of Presbyterianism into an ideology allied to Unionism, and thus the greater consolidation of Orangeism throughout Ulster.

VOLUNTEERS' PROGRAMME

In *Class Struggle 15* we contrasted Marx's analysis of the period with that offered by Connolly: "Marx focuses upon, with infinitely more detail, the real composition and movement within 'the vital elements of all classes' making up the Volunteers – the armed Protestantism of Ireland – in its first formation."

Marx describes the stages of the development of protestant republicanism from the reforming party led by Anglican Church of Ireland bourgeois like Grattan and Flood etc.:

"Their first object [was] emancipation from commercial and industrial fetters ... Then *National Independence* ... then *reform of the Parliament and Catholic Emancipation*. From this moment [1791] the movement of the Volunteers merges into that of the *United Irishmen*. The Catholic Question became that of the Irish people. The question was no longer to remove the disabilities from the Catholic upper and middle classes but to emancipate the Irish peasant, for the most part Catholic. The question became social as to its matter, assumed *French political principles*, as to the form remained national". (Marx and Engels on Ireland, pp174-5)

These events underline the emergence at the head of the struggle 'of a different race of men', Presbyterian merchants and manufacturers, and further testify to the dynamic and radical transformation of the social forces being mobilised by them – tenant farmers and Catholics, especially the peasantry – as the reforming ascendancy (anglican landowning bourgeois) buckle under their social and political links to the English Aristocracy. In this way Marx identifies the needs of an emergent Irish capitalism as the motor force behind the United Irishmen who in turn mobilised the peasantry for a set of national political demands which that peasantry itself, contrary to Connolly, had never been able to formulate or organise for.

This objective development towards the realisation of a mature capitalist mode of production meant setting in motion processes which brought the most economically advanced merchants and manufacturers to the head of a struggle for a bourgeois republic and the defeat of English colonialism and Irish landlordism. Starting from that perspective it is possible to see why these events also led to the mobilisation of one of the most oppressed social groups in defence of colonialism and landlordism under the banner of Orangeism.

Anti-national Reaction

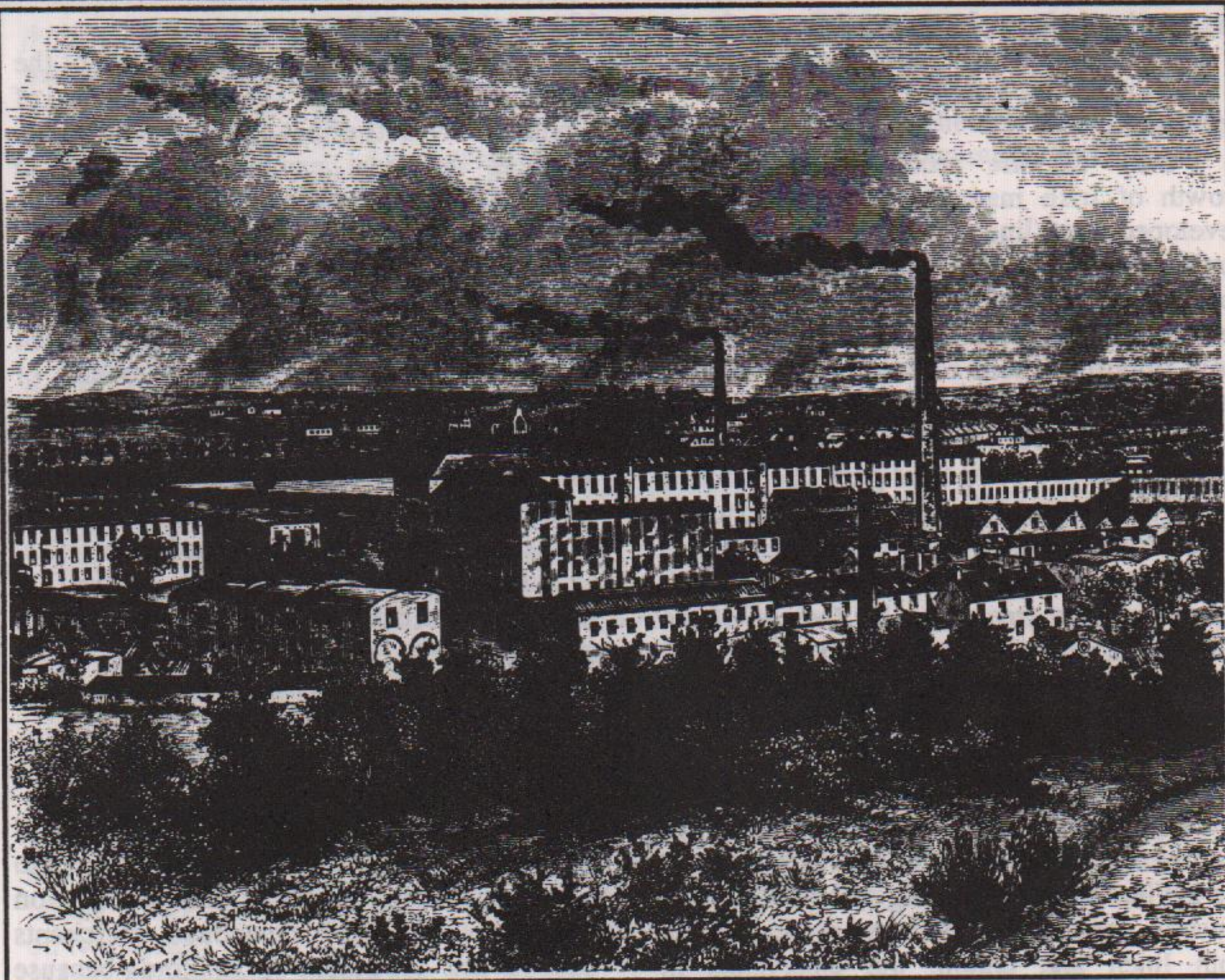
But without such a perspective there is no way to understand why the traditional protestant tenant defence organisations, which were the original form that Orangeism took in the rural land-hungry countryside and which existed to protect jobs and conditions from catholic 'dilution', would have been replaced by a mass organisation with a general political pro-colonial, anti-national programme and ideology only indirectly related to its original purpose. Connolly leaves himself in this situation by failing to analyse the development of capitalism in Ireland.

Comparison of the role of the peasantry in other parts of the country and the actual record of the Orange Order during the "disarming of Ulster" leading up to 1798, reinforces the importance of the national political and economic developments for the transformation of the Order – a factor which, we shall see later in very different circumstances, is also vital to any account of the continuing role that Orangeism plays in the Protestant working class. The fact that, as Gibbon points out, the interests of the landlord and cottier weaver were not directly antagonistic is a necessary but not sufficient explanation for both being in the same Orange Order.

It is also necessary to recognise the specific manner in which the cottier weavers were threatened by the expansion of factory production carried out by the same bourgeois strata who also provided the leadership of the United Irishmen. The weaknesses of those cottiers were exacerbated by the encouragement given to catholics to compete as linen weavers in the countryside and as factory labourers in the towns. The organisation and mobilisation of that catholic peasantry by the United Irishmen threatened to accelerate these economic assaults on the cottier weavers and to reinforce those assaults by radical political change. The continued growth of manufacturing would spell the end of the independent producer and his mode of production, an outcome that would be made even more certain by a revolution which sought to destroy landlordism for ever and remove the British ruling class and state interest in Ireland.

CONSPIRACY

Connolly's account of Orangeism lacks any historical materialist framework or method. Having believed, up to his return to Ireland in 1910 that Orangeism was an obsolete phenomenon in 20th century Ireland, he could only explain its re-emergence after 1910 in both nationalist and conspiratorial terms, because of the flaws already outlined in his view of Irish history. Thus he writes: "I have explained before how the perfectly devilish ingenuity of the master class had sought its ends in North-East Ulster. How the land was stolen from Catholics, given to Episcopallians but planted by Presbyterians; how the latter were persecuted by the Government but could not avoid the necessity of defending it against the Catholics and how out of this complicated situation there inevitably grew up a feeling of



Linen mills blossoming in the Lagan Valley

common interest between the slaves and the slave driver.

(*North-East Ulster. Forward, 2 Aug, 1913*)

Orangeism and Loyalism for Connolly, therefore, have both their historical foundations and material basis only in the Plantation of Ulster three hundred years previously. No subsequent event is considered relevant. It is this essentially vulgar materialist approach which leads him to think, even as the Loyalist Orange working class were being mobilised in their hundreds of thousands in 1911, that Orangeism was a phenomenon of landlordism, dying as this class disappeared from Ireland, that:

"... there is no economic class in Ireland today whose interests as a class are bound up with the union. The Irish landlords who had something to fear ... have now made their bargain under the various Land Purchase Acts ... only the force of religious bigotry remains an asset to Unionism ... it may be assumed that the 12th of July this year will be exceptionally large as every effort will be made, and no money spared, to make an imposing turn-out in the hope of averting Home Rule ... but the parade will be the last flicker of the dying fire which blazes up before totally expiring".

(*A plea for Socialist unity. Forward, 1911*)

Hence his false expectation that economic forces and class struggle would automatically replace sectarian division.

As we have attempted to illustrate, Connolly had no means to realise that the very conditions created by the emergence and triumph of orangeism and colonialism in the very specific conditions of 18th century Ireland would result in the re-emergence and consolidation of Orangeism among the industrial proletariat of the Lagan Valley. As a result Connolly never posed for himself as a revolutionary the task of fighting to break protestant workers from orangeism. Instead his vulgar reduction of all Irish history to a constant struggle between the native

oppressed and the foreign exploiters leads him to the false expectation that sectarian division will simply dissolve away as we see in the above quotation.

CAPITALISM AND THE PROTESTANT WORKING CLASS

"At one time in the industrial world of Great Britain and Ireland the skilled labourer looked down with contempt upon the unskilled and bitterly resented his attempt to get his children taught any of the skilled trades: the feeling of the Orangemen towards the Catholics is but a glorified representation on a big stage of the same passions inspired by the same unworthy motives – an atavistic survival of a dark and ignorant past: (*Forward, 1913*)

We need to look now at the development of the protestant working class and its ideology of Orangeism in the 19th century. But, as with the other period we have addressed, social and political processes and developments in Ulster in the 19th century must be located within the specific context of the defeat of the United Irishmen and the victory in Ireland of the British ruling class. The Act of Union underlined this new situation. It set firmly in motion economic processes whose maturation would result, by the end of the 19th century, in the complete integration of a highly industrial north-east Ulster into the British colonial capitalist system. Simultaneously the rest of Ireland would experience a similarly dependent development but as a stagnant commercialised agricultural reserve providing food and labour to the expanding capitalist British market.

This pattern of intensified colonial dependency was in turn to produce its own contradictions. The industrial sector of British capitalism and the newly emerging catholic bourgeois class in the agricultural south of Ireland increasingly sought, from the 1860s onwards, to come together to pursue their mutual interests in developing a rationalised

and efficient agriculture within a redefined political framework of Home Rule. That plan went against the interests of important sections of the British ruling class and forced the Irish catholic bourgeois leaders to kindle nationalist aspirations they could not always control. These factors provided the general framework for development in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is only within this overall context that the specific features of industrialisation in Ulster and the role of orangeism and loyalism can be understood.

THE EMERGENCE OF CATHOLIC NATIONALISM

The development of capitalist agriculture in Ireland in the 19th century, the strengthening of merchant capital especially in Dublin and in Cork with the development of the railways and shipping (and the tentative re-emergence of a southern Irish industry (e.g. the co-op movement) towards the end of the 19th century) brought into existence a distinctive catholic bourgeoisie. As Engels describes it:

"Soon after the establishment of the Union (1800) began the *liberal-national* opposition of the *urban bourgeoisie* which as in every peasant struggle with dwindling townlets (for example Denmark) finds its natural leaders in lawyers. These also need the peasants; they therefore had to find slogans to attract the peasants. Thus O'Connell discovered such a slogan first in the *Catholic Emancipation*, and then in the *Repeal of the Union*. (Engels in *Ireland and the Irish Question* p.451)

So the motive for both support from one wing of the liberal industrial bourgeoisie to the partial solution of the democratic tasks in Ireland and the opposition of the Tory interests, reflects the different perceptions of these sections of the British ruling class of the best means of pursuing and protecting British interests as a whole.

Thus for the liberal bourgeoisie in England the fact that the new Irish bourgeoisie was catholic became less and less important. For the Tories, given their perspective on protecting imperial interests, protestantism and loyalism remained vital as an ideological basis for rule in Ireland, and Tory strength in particular.

The economic basis of this is graphically described by Marx when commenting on one of the earlier reforms granted by the British state to accommodate the Catholic Church and its bourgeoisie, by disestablishing the Church of Ireland in 1867:

"The English Established Church in Ireland—or what they used to call here the Irish church—is the religious bulwark of *English landlordism* in Ireland, and at the same time the outpost of the Established Church in England herself. (I am speaking of the Established Church as a *landowner*.) The overthrow of the Established Church in Ireland will mean its downfall in England and the two will be followed by the doom of landlordism—first in Ireland and then in England. I have, however, been convinced from the first that the social revolution must begin *seriously* from the bottom, that is, from landownership. (Marx, in 1868: *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p.160)

Here Marx is underlining the significance for Ireland of divisions within

the British ruling class. In fact the relative position of catholicism and protestantism in the 19th century is almost a reversal from their respective roles in the 17th and 18th centuries, in relation to bourgeois democratic goals. This situation creates one vital condition for protestantism to increasingly assume in Ulster the political significance it had at the end of the 18th century only among the cottier weavers and the ascendancy, that is as the banner of anti-national reaction. We need now to examine the other factors which contributed to this transformation of the respective roles of the two religious ideologies.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BELFAST WORKING CLASS

The defeat of Belfast and the United Irishmen did not lead to an immediate assault on the Belfast bourgeoisie in the Act of Union. The maintenance of full protective duties on cotton until 1816 and of some protection until 1824 gave Ulster capital the opportunity to use its development of factory production to avoid the fate of the rest of Ireland's industry as it crumbled before the superior competitive might of British industry. The vital period, however, occurred around 1825 when, with the development of wet spinning, the linen industry was transformed, by an injection of capital from the declining cotton industry, into a highly mechanised and qualitatively new industry. The growth of the Brewery and the Shipping industries began tentatively to follow in the wake of this expansion of steam powered linen mills throughout the Lagan Valley (and Ulster generally). By the 1850s with the rapidly expanding population of Belfast, joint stock banking promoted a further stage of developments within the industry, one peculiar to Belfast—the combination of weaving and spinning. With the increase of commodity farming as industrial expansion continued the character and shape of the class structure in Ulster began to take on the features unique to that part of Ireland.

The figures for the population growth in Belfast from 1770 onwards underline the enormous scale of development and change in the class structure.

1770	8500	1841	70,000
1800	20,000	1851	100,000
1815	30,000	1861	120,000
1831	50,000	1901	350,000

But the massive 14-fold increase from 1760 to 1861 hides the process of rural impoverishment, forced migration and urban competition for jobs so typical of the way in which capitalism had developed in Britain.

The situation of catholics in Belfast was not, therefore, unlike that of the Irish in English cities as described by Marx:

"...the English bourgeoisie has not only exploited Irish poverty to keep down the working class in England by *forced immigration* of poor Irishmen, but it has also divided the proletariat into two hostile camps. ...The average English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers wages and the *standard of life*. He feels national and religious antipathies for him. He regards him somewhat like the *poor whites* of the Southern States of North America

regard their black slaves." This antagonism is artificially nourished and supported by the bourgeoisie. It knows that this scission is the true secret of maintaining its power." (Marx, 1870. in *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p.254)

Thus in the growth and concentration of Belfast's urban industrial working class, job competition from impoverished catholic rural migrants (10% of Belfast in 1800, 33% in 1835) gave life "spontaneously" to Orangeism as an expression of protestant workers' attempts to protect themselves from catholic dilution, just as it led to anti-Irish racism in English cities. As in England, as Engels describes in *The Conditions of the working class* (1844), this, aided by a bourgeoisie who owned the land and controlled housing developments, created large scale ghettoised divisions especially in West Belfast, as the city expanded. Employment in the Mills became, as a result, sectarianised and stratified in terms reflecting the dominance of protestant workers in the labour market.

This labour market was cruelly harsh as the conditions for survival of the presbyterian bourgeoisie against English capitalist competition made it necessary to extract a significantly higher amount of surplus value out of its workforce. Thus the breaking of the textile workers' struggles after the end of the Napoleonic war created the conditions for using every device to lower wages and conditions. The textile workers' union disappeared in 1825, not to appear again for 40 years.

Against this background O'Connell and the catholic bourgeoisie emerged in the "Catholic Association" which was formed in 1823, to fight for emancipation, against the tithe payments to the landowners' church, and to win repeal. The complete union of the catholic peasantry, the Catholic Church and the catholic bourgeoisie raised once more the nationalist threat to the colony. It is in this context that the regional mobilisation of the protestant working masses under the banner of Orangeism and loyalism began to develop. The leaders of this mobilisation were not only the ascendancy but, from 1830 onwards the presbyterian bourgeoisie. Their evangelical counter revolution led by the demagogue anti-catholic Cooke, signalled the complete class submission of this group to the interests of imperialism. By the end of the 1830s more than half the Orange Lodges in Ireland were located in the greater Belfast region.

However, competitive job-rivalry between workers, and the catholic emancipation movement, cannot fully account for the ability of the landowners and bourgeoisie to mobilise protestant workers, with increasing success, behind the banners of sectarian anti-nationalism. For it is clear that as industrialization continued throughout the century, the proportion of catholics in the working class population of Belfast declined relative to protestants. Between 1861 and 1910 the total population of Ulster declined by 10% mainly due to emigration from the land. But the proportion of Catholics also declined from 33% of the total to 25%. In Belfast in particular the number of catholics rose from 40,000 to 85,000 over the same period due to migration from the land. But as

a proportion of the total population of Belfast they also declined from 34% to 24% in the face of large scale protestant migration to Belfast from the countryside. These figures indicate that in Belfast as in major English cities Irish catholics tended to become a smaller proportion of the available workforce towards the end of the 19th century. As a result, as Engels noted in 1892, anti-Irish ideology became less and less effective as a tool of Conservative influence among English workers in England's major industrial centres. But this did not happen in Belfast. We need to understand why, contrary to Connolly's experience in Scotland or Larkin's experience in Liverpool, this was not happening in Belfast.

The underlying cause was to be found in Belfast's hinterland, quite different from the rural surroundings of English cities. Catholic-protestant divisions were solidly sustained among domestic weavers and rural labourers in Ulster throughout the 19th century, where proportions remained more stable. But to understand exactly how these divisions acted as a powerful reservoir feeding sectarian divisions in the industrial workplaces and urban areas of Belfast and Derry we must examine the nature of the second stage of Belfast industrial development in the latter half of the 19th century and its effects on the working class.

IMPERIALISM AND THE LABOUR ARISTOCRACY

The key to the development of capitalism in the latter half of the 19th century is the growth of imperialism, as free trade and *laissez-faire* capitalist competition was transformed into the stage of monopoly. Britain was the first and most powerful capitalist power and so was able to allow certain improvements in the conditions of the whole of the English working class from 1847 onwards. As large scale manufacturing emerged, certain strata, in particular craft skilled workers benefited most, in return for industrial peace. Engels referred in 1892 to this strata as an 'aristocracy of labour'. We need to look briefly in the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky in order to see more clearly the specific form and function this aristocracy of labour had (and still has) within the protestant working class of Ulster. "The truth is this, during the period of England's industrial monopoly the English working class have to a certain extent shared in the benefits of the monopoly. These benefits were very unequally parcelled out amongst them; the privileged minority pocketed most but even the great mass had at least a temporary share now and then" "Secondly, the great Trades Unions. They are organisations of those trades in which the labour of grown-up men predominates, or is alone applicable. Here the competition neither of women and children nor of machinery has so far weakened their organised strength. The engineers, carpenters and joiners, the bricklayers are each of them a power to that extent, that they can even successfully resist the introduction of machinery. That their condition has remarkably improved since 1848 there can be no doubt ... they form an aristocracy of labour among the working

class; they have succeeded in enforcing for themselves a relative comfortable position and they accept it as final. They are the model working men of Messrs Leane Levi and Giffen, and they are very nice people nowadays to deal with, for any sensible capitalist and for the whole capitalist class"

(Engels, in the 1892 preface to 'Conditions of the Working Class in England')

In these two quotations, Engels recognises the aristocracy as a fraction of the English working class while aware that materially all workers benefited from Britain's role as the first monopoly capitalist state. Engels believed, correctly that the emergence of New Unions of the unskilled, semi-skilled and especially of women, heralded the end both of Britain's monopoly position in world capitalism and of the dominance over the working masses of the narrow, conservative craft outlook of the labour aristocracy of craft workers.

Lenin developed these insights to give them their fullest expression in a theory associated with his examination of imperialism as a higher stage of capitalism. He bases his analysis on the points already observed by Engels. He notes ...

"two important distinguishing features of imperialism were already observed [by Engels] in Great Britain by the middle of the 19th century, viz. vast colonial possessions and a monopolist position in the world market. Marx and Engels traced this connection between opportunism in the working-class movement and the imperialist features of British capitalism systematically, during the course of several decades."

"The causes are: 1) exploitation of the whole world by this country; 2) its monopolistic position in the world market; 3) its colonial monopoly. The effects are: 1) a section of the British proletariat becomes bourgeois; 2) a section of the proletariat permits itself to be led by men bought by, or at least paid by, the bourgeoisie." (Imperialism, section 8.)

Finally, Lenin characterised the situation - in 1916 - as one where imperialism has grown from an embryo into a predominant system and specifies some of the effects:

"The distinctive feature of the present situation is the prevalence of such economic and political conditions that are bound to increase the irreconcilability between opportunism and the general and vital interests of the working class movement ... instead of the undivided monopoly of Great Britain, we see a few imperialist powers contending for the right to share in this monopoly, and this struggle is characteristic of the whole period of the beginning of the twentieth century. Opportunism cannot now be completely triumphant in the working-class as it was in England in the second half of the nineteenth century;" (Imperialism, section 8)

And even more strongly:

"The bourgeoisie of an imperialist "Great" Power can economically bribe the upper strata of "its" workers by spending on this a hundred million or so francs a year, for its superprofits most likely amount to about a thousand million. And how this little sop is divided among the labour ministers,

"labour representatives" (remember Engels' splendid analysis of the term), labour members of War Industries Committees, labour officials, workers belonging to the narrow craft unions, office employees, etc., etc., is a secondary question."

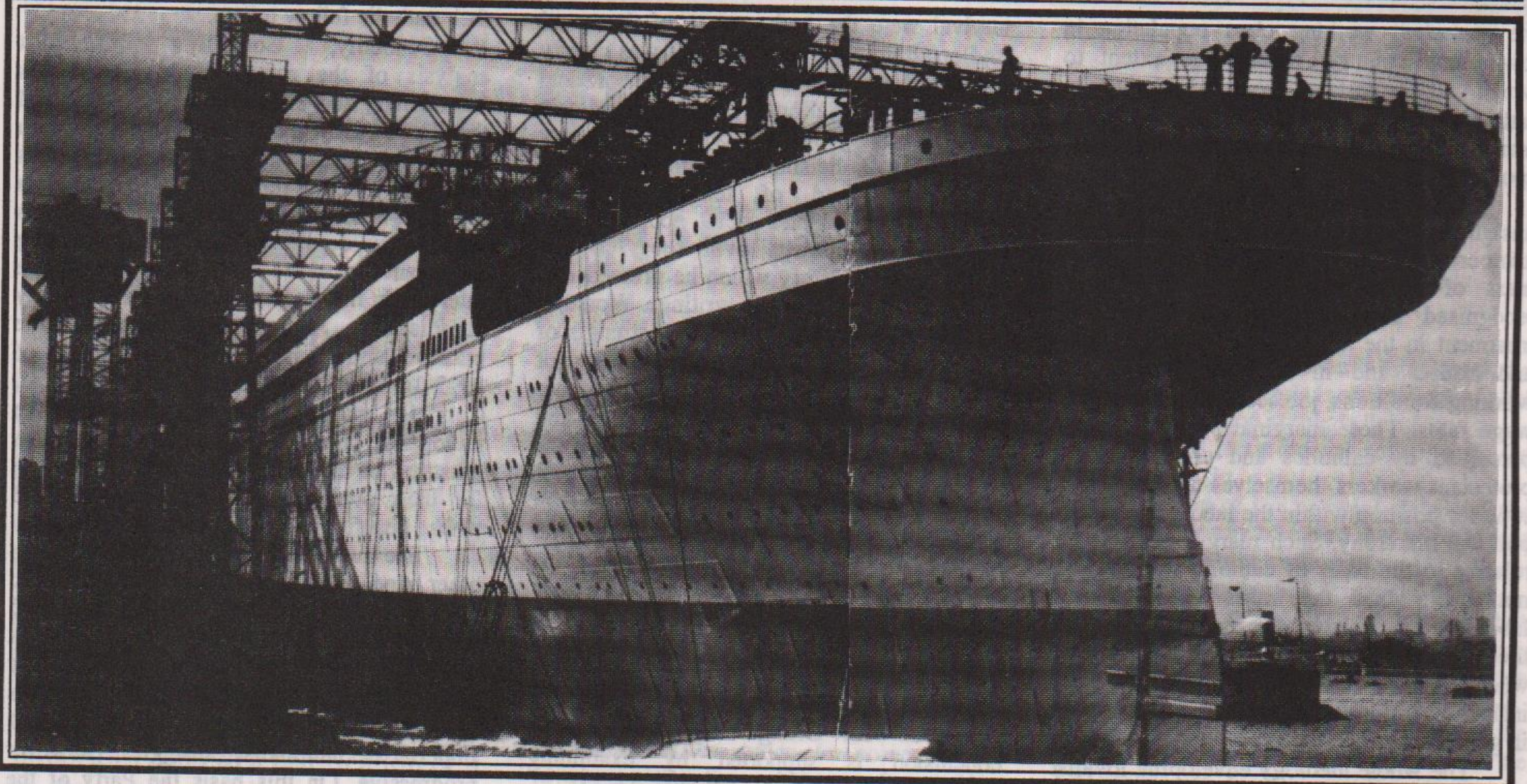
"It was possible in those days to bribe and corrupt the working class of one country for decades. This is now improbable, if not impossible. But on the other hand every imperialist "Great" Power can and does bribe smaller strata (than in England in 1848-68) of the "labour aristocracy". (Imperialism and the Split in Socialism, Lenin, Vol 23)

Lenin elaborated from these points the role of the late 19th century 'labour aristocracy', the craft trades of the vast ship building and engineering complexes in Britain, in providing the base for a Trade Union bureaucracy and officialdom complicit in British imperialist rapacity in the world market. The politics of 'reformism' expressed the outlook of this stratum in Britain and in Belfast in the emergence of a Labour Party in the first decade of the 20th century: "Formerly a "bourgeois labour party", to use Engels's remarkably profound expression, could arise only in one country, because it alone enjoyed a monopoly but, on the other hand, it could exist for a long time. Now a "bourgeois labour party" is inevitable and typical in all imperialist countries" (ibid)

Trotsky, following on from Lenin's analysis, attempted to relate his key ideas to the changed conditions in the 1920s and 1930s. Trotsky notes in particular a distinction between the nature of the labour aristocracy in imperialised countries compared to the Labour Aristocracy in the imperialist countries: "Mercilessly plundering its Asiatic and African slaves and its Latin American semi-slaves, foreign capitalism is at present compelled in the colonies to feed a thin layer of aristocracy, pitiful, pathetic but still an aristocracy amid the universal poverty. Stalinism has in recent years become the party of this labour "aristocracy" as well as of the "left" section" of the petty bourgeoisie." (A Fresh Lesson, Writings 1938-9, Pathfinder, p. 73)

BELFAST LABOUR ARISTOCRACY

Let us now turn to the significance of these points for a deeper understanding of the Belfast protestant proletariat. The second half of the 19th century saw the emergence of the shipbuilding and engineering industries, spatially concentrated within the Lagan valley, more particularly in Belfast. These developments created in Belfast, like elsewhere, a stratum of the most highly skilled workers, with the traditional craft prejudices and privileges relative to all workers. However, we need to place this development with three important contexts. First as we have seen, the enormous historical advantage that British capitalism had as the first complete monopolist of the world market. Second, Britain's role as a colonial power, which as Lenin pointed out gave an added basis to the monopolist role and the advantages accruing to all sections of workers in England from 1848 onwards.



Third, Ireland was a colony within which Ulster's mature, advanced industrialisation was achieved through its full economic integration with British capitalism; whereas the rest of the island stagnated. All these factors affected the nature of the Labour Aristocracy in Belfast.

As we have seen, the first successful stage of industrialisation, in linen, took place against the background of fierce assault on the working class by the bourgeoisie. Competition between catholic and protestant workers was an added factor to the lower wages of all workers. A sectarian stratification pattern of employment emerged, which reflected the ability of protestant workers, through Orange patronage, to control the labour market. With the onset of bourgeois catholic nationalism and its threat to the colonial rule of the aristocracy and protestant capital in Ulster, the political mobilisation of protestant workers behind the Orange banner intensified (e.g. 1837 against O'Connell's visit to Belfast). By the 1850s employer patronage grew as a result of both this threat and the expansion of the economy.

It was within these social relations that the Labour Aristocracy of craft workers – carpenters, plumbers, joiners etc. – which existed in the 1850s had grown up. Many of those who made up this stratum in the 1850s had been migrants from the declining Dublin protestant working class. Many were also soon involved in leading the Orange riots of 1857. Events in the second half of the nineteenth century did not dissipate these sectarian divisions, as occurred in England, but intensified them as the Belfast labour Aristocracy developed to a level unique in Ireland. The process was one of the generalisation of manufacture from cotton to linen, engineering and shipbuilding involving the crystallization of a classical Labour Aristocracy on the basis of access to the British market while at the same time the catholic peasantry was being mobilised behind the emergent catholic nationalist bourgeoisie.

HEGEMONY

Two points need to be underlined here. First, the Labour Aristocracy constituted proportionately a larger section of the working class in Belfast than in any other part of the colony of Ireland, and was thus an especially key section of the protestant working class. Its impact and material ability (in Ulster through family, ghetto and Lodge) to hegemonise the rest of the protestant proletariat throughout Ulster was correspondingly greater. Secondly, its relationship to the employing class was further structured by the position of Ulster within the most powerful colonial and industrial power of the globe, and as a result its sense of political identity was anchored in resistance to any threat from Irish nationalism, whose goals threatened these material foundations of the Ulster economy. So Orangeism for the labour aristocracy of Belfast provided the means of ensuring both its continued supremacy within the labour market under capitalism and simultaneously the maintenance of the political conditions to guarantee the economic basis for its privileges.

The fact that protestant labour aristocrats created the very model of exemplary Trades Unions, similar to the rest of Britain, in defence of their wages and conditions against the employing class and other strata of workers; the fact that they, simultaneously, were the most resolute in defence of Orange political principles, is not evidence, as Patterson would have us believe, for some mysterious *relative autonomy* separating their ideas off from their economic conditions as workers. What it does underline as Marx, Engels and Lenin pointed out again and again, is the compatability of trade unionism per se with capitalism. Trade Unionism as the organised expression of workers within capitalism, has no necessary connection with socialist politics – trade unions have been and often are, anti-socialist, catholic or liberal, or even racist. As Lenin

pointed out:

"All those who talk about "overrating the importance of ideology", about exaggerating the role of the conscious element etc., imagine that the labour movement pure and simple can elaborate, and will elaborate, an independent ideology for itself if only the workers "wrest their fate from the hands of the leaders". But this is a profound mistake" (*What is to be done. Progress. p39*)

"There is much talk about spontaneity. But the *spontaneous* development of the working class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology ... for the spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism ... and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy is to *combat spontaneity, to divert* the working class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of the revolutionary Social-Democracy" (p.41)

Of course the form that such enslavement took in Ulster, for reasons that have been made clear, are ideologically bound up with the protestant bourgeoisie' hostility to Irish nationalism in the 19th century. Significantly, as Gibbon correctly points out, it was in the late 1860s when Gladstone and the Liberal Party first bruited their proposals for Home Rule, that the Protestant Working Men's Association, made up of the skilled strata, acted to force the employers into an alliance of Orangemen against Home Rule. This became the basis for an expanded Orange Order – an all-class alliance. In turn this was later to be mobilised by the Unionist Party against Sinn Fein. It embraced the grandees of the Aristocracy and the Tory Party as well as the masses of protestant workers, labour aristocrats and much of the protestant bourgeoisie. The ability of Orangeism, and the closely related Masonic and other orders bound up with protestantism, to hegemonise

the protestant working class population in towns and country, reveals the extent to which all protestant workers relative to catholics, were in a position to receive marginal privileges in return for support for apolitical cause.

These privileges do not mean that unskilled protestant workers were also labour aristocrats. It does mean, though, that the mass of protestant workers enjoyed and recognised that they enjoyed preferential treatment in the allocation of available jobs and houses and in the determination of working conditions, job security and possibly wage rates. These marginal privileges were perceived by catholics and understood by protestant workers themselves to represent a superior position within the labour social and political hierarchy. Such marginal privileges relative to the mass of catholic workers did not mean that the mass of protestant labourers anything of the material levels of the crystallised Labour Aristocracy proper, who remained the key basis for bourgeois influence within the protestant working class in general.

The whole ideology enveloping loyalist working class life in the larger towns testifies to a strong sense of inner belief in the communal and personal superiority of the protestant. What Marxists observe is that such belief has a material foundation and in that sense can be said to specify a shared 'labour aristocratic' outlook, despite recurrent tensions and conflict among the economic layers of protestant workers.

CONNOLLY DISARMED

Connolly, as the earlier quotation shows, did not develop any such understanding of the conditions giving rise to Orangeism in the industrial working class that grew up in the Lagan Valley. His view was that its historical foundation lay in the plantation of Ulster in the early 17th century, and that its conditions of existence and

survival were the maintenance of that rural landlord-dominated society. This was clearly wrong. Furthermore, his own theoretical innovations in relation to the nature and role of Irish labour, plus his exceptionalist theory of Irish catholicism, left him with no scientific method of teasing out the complexity of Ireland's social, economic and political development over the 700-year sweep of Irish history which he pressed into service in his propaganda writings. Worse, it led him to underplay the potential strength of Irish nationalism among the majority of catholic workers, just as it led him to ignore the increasing reality of Orangeism and loyalism among protestant workers in the first decade of the 20th century. It was thus inevitable that he should have been swept along with the tide of nationalism. He had no method of working out and arming his socialist party, or the Labour Party or trade unions, with a perspective or tactics with which to attempt to break the most concentrated industrial proletariat in Ireland from its pro-imperialist and Unionist coalition with Orange capitalism. Such a conclusion is supported by examining Connolly's record of political activity in Belfast in the 1910-14 period.

However, the most important points to emphasise by way of conclusion here are the two distinctive features of the Connolly analysis which left him in this position. Firstly there was his determination to identify the fight for Irish freedom with the struggle of Irish toilers through all the various periods of Irish history. From this point of view it was simply because they were toilers that protestant workers must, underneath it all, be essentially sympathetic to the national struggle despite all the evidence. This perspective made it all too easy for Connolly to underestimate the difficulty of winning protestant workers from Unionism, for increasingly it was only the manipulative lies of the agents of British Imperialism in Ireland that really held them back from allying with

their catholic fellow toilers.

Secondly, Connolly's materialist analysis of the roots of Orangeism was fragmentary and limited to the Plantation and the 'landlordism' established under English rule which was clearly disappearing in his own time. All that remained in working class loyalism was, therefore, a false consciousness which could be erased by educating protestant workers to their class-wide interests in the trade union and Labour Party organisations. And when in the heat of the massive anti-Home Rule mobilisations of 1912-14 this had clearly not happened, Connolly moved closer and closer to the nationalist position that protestant workers must just be dragged against their wishes, but for their own good, into a united Ireland whose benefits would win them over.

The authentic Marxist tradition, on the other hand, leads us to a much more scientific historical understanding of this profound division in the class – and in the nation. At the same time it enables revolutionary socialists to carefully distinguish the class programme of the proletariat from all anti-imperialist nationalist struggles, however progressive. On this basis the Party of the proletariat can combine in its practical struggle its tactics towards revolutionary nationalist struggle with the strategic goal of working class power.

Only with such a method, both scientific and tactically flexible, could Connolly perhaps have begun to concretely address a key historic problem that still faces the future vanguard Party of the Irish working class with as much sharpness and immediacy as ever before.

Instead, and tragically, with regard to the division of nation and class, James Connolly is remembered for little more than the validation of his dire prediction that Partition would be a "carnival of reaction".

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South Africa

The National Question

The National Question is probably the most extensively debated issue of the South African revolution. This is because it has become the central ideological question for all the contending parties.

For the white racists their multi-national and multi-racial theory is central, both to the maintenance of their rule over the black majority through splitting it into a series of 'minorities', and to a justification of it to the 'public opinion' within the imperialist democracies. To this end the whites have attempted to consolidate the old 'native reserves' into 'homelands' for the so-called nations; Zulu, Tswana, Sotho and so on.

These linguistic and cultural groupings owe their origins to the consolidation and creation of Bantu kingdoms during the great period of upheaval, war and migration in the early nineteenth century. This was known as the Mfecane ('the crushing') among the Zulu or the Difaqane ('forced migration') amongst the Sotho. In this period the cattle raising Bantu tribes were led by figures such as King Shaka, who founded the powerful and expansive Zulu kingdom. King Moshoeshoe founded the Kingdom of Basotho, Mzilikazi that of the Ndebele, Soshangane the Gaza empire.

These states and their peoples had hardly come into existence before they were disrupted by the trek of the Boers and the expansion of the British Cape colony. Economic development in the twentieth century has thoroughly mixed the peoples of South Africa despite all the attempts of the racists to prevent it.

The apartheid state and the employers have long tried to divide their black workforce by playing upon 'tribal' (in reality *linguistic*) differences. They have long used the Zulus in particular as policeman in the mine compounds. In addition the Bantustan system has artificially preserved or restored the system of 'chiefs' and 'kings'. This has left a legacy of division which every progressive movement has sought to overcome.

Therefore within the liberation movement - the Congress tradition, the Pan-African tradition, the Black Consciousness Movement and the Unity movement - there have always been compelling reasons to address the National Question. Has South Africa one, two, four or even more nations? Let us look first at the majority tradition, that of the ANC and its Stalinist core.

The ANC and the National Question

At the heart of the ANC's and the South African Communist Party's (SACP) programme is their analysis of South Africa as a 'colonialism of a special type'. Obviously it is the case that every country possesses a unique combination of features in its development. But revolutionaries should always beware of a method that counterposes the exceptional to the general, or the nationally specific to the international. Stalinism, with its multitude of 'national road' programmes, always pleads unique circumstances in order to come to the conclusion that the overthrow of capitalism is not a task of the coming struggle. In common with its counter-revolutionary twin - Social Democracy - it holds that working class power and socialism are a distant and not an immediate goal.

The South African racist state certainly has its origins in colonisation by white settlers and was for a whole epoch a colony of the Dutch and then the British. But South Africa has long been ruled by an indigenous bourgeoisie. To confuse the present situation with colonialism is to mistake the past for the present. In reality however this 'mistake' is not an accidental error on the part of the ANC/SACP theoreticians.

It enables them to give the struggle against apartheid the character of an anti-colonial struggle - just like those that have taken place in all other states of Africa. What interests the ANC in doing this is the fact that not one of these anti-colonial struggles led to the overthrow of capitalism. They stand in the ANC's view as testimony to the separate 'historic stage' of national independence. Of course the ANC stresses that this colonialism is 'of a special type':

"What is 'special' or different about the colonial system as it obtains in South Africa is that there is no spatial separation between the colonising power (the white minority state) and the colonised black people... The special features of South Africa's internal colonialism are also compounded by the fact that the South African state, parliament and government are juridically independent of any metropolitan country..." (*Apartheid South Africa - Colonialism of a Special Type, issued by the ANC*).

The 1910 Act of Union, the 1931 Statute of Westminster and the 1961 Declaration of the Republic are not seen as the legal and constitutional reflections of South Africa's shedding of its colonial and the semi-colonial status. Rather they are treated simply as acts of deception. The ANC believes that these juridical formalities should not be allowed to cloud the colonial content of the white supremacist state, and that:

"Flowing from this analysis of the South

African racist state as essentially colonial, the South African struggle is an anti-colonialist national liberation struggle."

The means to attain this objective, as in the rest of Africa, is:

"the abolition of the colonial state and the transfer of power to a national government elected by popular suffrage".

Again and again the SACP repeats:

"What needs to be stressed here is that national self-determination, as in all other national liberation struggles is the decisive issue."

The ANC has altered its position on the national question several times since the SACP's rise to dominance within it. But its analysis has always been made to fit both the stages theory and the popular front strategy. The position enshrined in the Freedom Charter reflected the Congress Alliance popular front of the 1950s. The Charter therefore talked of 'national groups'. Later SACP writers spoke of an 'African Nation' in counterposition to the tribalisation attempts of the racist regime, adding to this a 'Coloured nation' and an 'Indian nation'.

MAJORITY NATION

After the Morogoro Conference in 1969 heavy stress was placed on the idea of the African nation as the 'majority nation' whose national liberation was to be 'the main content of the present stage of the South African revolution'. The upsurge of the Black Consciousness Movement in the mid-seventies, with its insistence on the unity of the non-white population, plus the effects of the Nationalist Government's multi-nation policy designed to minorities all the black 'nationalities', obliged the ANC to abandon its own theory of national groups:

"Today both the ANC and the SACP recognise the existence of two nations in South Africa, the oppressed and the oppressor nations..." (*Selected Writings on the Freedom Charter, 1985*)

Yet even here the ANC is not consistent. It seeks to limit the nationhood of the whites, elsewhere referring to them as: "the colonising 'nation', the white national groups" (*Questions on the National Democratic Revolution, Sechaba, Oct. 1982*)

B.Molapo writing in *African Communist* (1977) reveals the reason for clinging to at least a two nation or nationality thesis: "The great disadvantage of the one-nation thesis is, then, that it obscures the colonial nature of our society and in consequence the national character of our liberation struggle".

The SACP/ANC view of the national liberation struggle against colonialism claims to stand in the tradition of Marx and Lenin. Before we can finally reveal all its

errors it is necessary to honestly explain the Marxist position on the National Question.

MARXISTS AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The classic definition of a nation comes from Stalin's solitary work of theoretical significance in the history of communism, namely *Marxism and the National Question* (1913):

"A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make up manifested in a common culture" (*Works Vol 2, p.30*)

Trotsky was later to concur with this view:

"This combined definition, compounding the psychological attributes of a nation with the geographic and economic conditions of its development, is not only correct theoretically but also practically fruitful, for then the solution to the problem of each nation's fate must perforce be sought along the lines of changing the material conditions of its existence, beginning with territory." (*Leon Trotsky, Stalin, Vol 1, p.230*)

The views of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin were developed in counter position to the subjective-idealist national theory of the Austro-Marxists. Otto Bauer in *The National Question and Social Democracy* (1907) arrived at the definition that **"The nation is the totality of men bound together through a common destiny with a community of character"**.

This is an entirely circular description of national consciousness. Elsewhere Bauer says explicitly that **"a nation exists if its component parts believe it to be a nation"**. Karl Renner – another Austro-Marxist – brought out the full idealism and subjectivism of this approach ten years after Bauer's book was written. In 1917 he wrote: **"Long before the nation emerged as a political factor it existed unconsciously as a national character, semi-consciously as national feeling and finally as a clear national consciousness. The feeling, and awareness of the feeling, that someone who has the same language and culture belongs to us, that 'we' are different from 'foreigners', that we have to stand with our own people and against foreigners, is naive nationalism: that primitive, certainly genuine, and in a sense eternal impulse in the life of the emotions"**.

The subjective emotional expression of modern nationalistic ideology is projected backwards as a cause of the nation's existence and forward as its eternal nature.

This view insists that today's national community is a result of destiny or fate. The nation is locked between an unalterable past and an inevitable future. This thoroughly a-historical bourgeois approach leads inevitably to the fatal national chauvinism which the Austro-Marxists espoused in the First World War. Against it Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky defined the nation in materialist terms.

Nevertheless one must make certain criticisms and corrections to Stalin's famous formula. To use it as a check list of characteristics is wrong. Stalin himself erroneously proclaims: **"There is no nation which at one and the same time speaks**

several languages". But what about Switzerland? It speaks three major languages and several dialects of a minor one and has existed as a nation for centuries. What is important is, firstly, intercommunication and community of culture, not necessarily a single language and secondly absolute equality and absence of privileges. Under these conditions differences of 'mother language' will not be sufficient to split a nation united by economy, culture and history.

A second, more substantial objection to Stalin's definition is that it deals with being rather than becoming. In other words it is a static categorisation that fits existing nations but cannot grasp a struggle for national existence. The third objection is that in

Stalin's pre-1913 definition national culture and psychology or character ignores class differences within the nation. These criticisms are not true of Stalin and Lenin's whole corpus of work on the national question in the years 1912-14, but Stalin's composite definition does have this weakness.

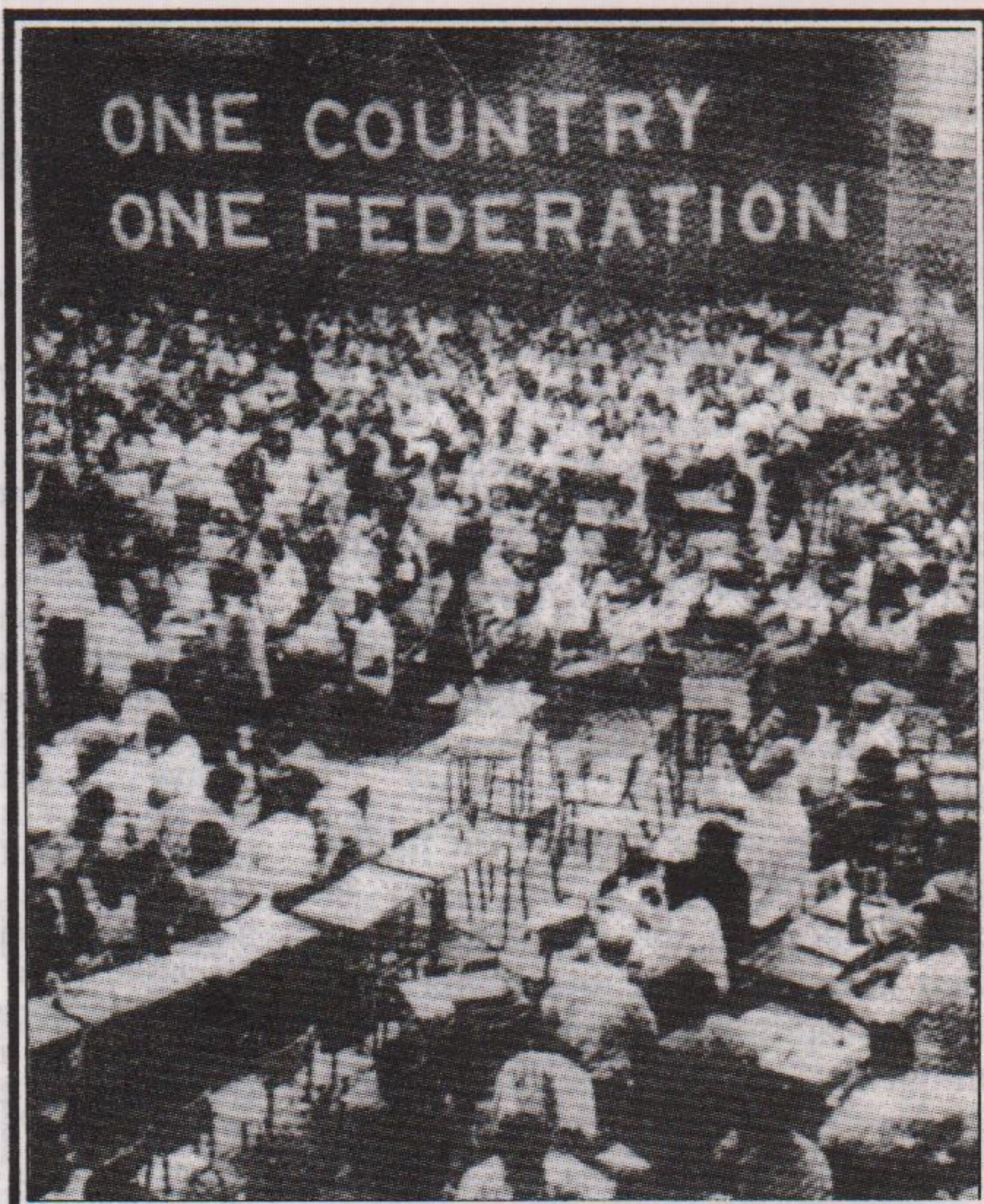
A nation is a community composed of exploiting and exploited classes which has developed within a definite territory on the basis of a common economic life, a common language(s) and a common culture which expresses a conscious identity distinct from that of other nations.

The development of nations must be understood historically. The nation state is the typical state form of the bourgeois epoch. It sweeps away the political and state forms of earlier epochs. Thus for example the feudal state with its local or provincial particularism was based on fiefdoms held together in personal union and transmitted and modified by dynastic means. Its subjects, divided into Orders or Estates, were ruled via a series of privileges (private laws).

NATIONAL MARKETS

Modern nations began to form in the final disintegrating phase of feudalism. National struggles centred on the tasks of unity and independence. Merchant and manufacturing capital sought the formation of a wider arena for the development of exchange and production free of the multiplicity of customs duties, legal systems, local currencies and arbitrary plunder or extortion by the aristocracy. It sought the freeing of the land from what it regarded as parasites.

In short, capitalism needed an expanded arena for the development of its own productive forces. This necessitated a compact, contiguous block of territory, a common language or mutually understood



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languages as a means of verbal and above all literary communication. It meant the creation of a common economic life based on a uniform currency, weights and measures, external but not internal customs barriers and a uniform legal system. In short, it needed a unified national market.

The ideology of this struggle was 'nationalism' and involved the revolutionary bourgeoisie and its petit-bourgeois allies in the creation of a national culture, with a standardised national language which was a written medium first and foremost, a national education system and a literary culture. All this was enormously progressive as against the remnants of feudalism with its dynastic loyalties, its dialects and its 'rural idiocy'.

Yet despite the progressive nature of this struggle against all pre-capitalist modes of production, the nation and the nation-state are composed of antagonistic classes. The national state is a state of capitalism's ruling class. All 'national culture', though shared by other classes, remains predominantly bourgeois (it has as its purpose the domination of these classes). Of course, such national cultures have 'democratic' and 'popular' elements within them. These elements are contributed from the life and struggles of the urban petit-bourgeoisie, the poor peasantry and the proletariat against their class enemies. But these are either appropriated into the bourgeois national culture in so far as they do not clash with fundamental bourgeois values, or they are subordinated into regional, local or class sub-cultures.

This phase of development was experienced in Europe, North and South America and Japan in capitalism's earliest and progressive phase. By and large, however, in Africa and Asia large-scale capitalism came with their domination by imperialism – an aggressive external force which trampled on the existing pre-capitalist modes of

production, breaking them up militarily and economically. Consequently, modern nationalism was born in these continents as a response to this onslaught, with the petit-bourgeoisie usually having to stand in for a 'national bourgeoisie' that was either very weak or tied to imperialism.

SEMI-COLONIES

Petit-bourgeois nationalism found itself in conflict with the bourgeoisie and in fear of the class independence of the proletariat. In the colonial and semi-colonial countries it faced the task of unifying states where the productive forces had not developed sufficiently to create national markets, and where the state borders reflected the division imposed by inter-imperialist rivalries. As a result the 'peoples' of these states were made up of various language groups, often lacking literacy, and with a history of the cynical exploitation of these differences by the imperialist administrators or rival imperialisms from outside.

This has left to the formally independent states of Africa, the Middle East and Asia a legacy of internal and external divisions which have either prevented or stunted the development of a nationalism within these states. They face constant pressure from imperialism. This pressure comes economically from the IMF, the World Bank. Militarily and politically it comes from US and European imperialism either directly or through its minor imperialist stooges and semi-colonial gendarmes. This has led to trans-state nationalisms such as 'pan-Islamism', 'pan-Arabism' and 'pan-Africanism'. Yet the existing states with their culture inherited from capitalist development has made these 'pan-nationalisms' a utopian project, constantly breaking down when faced with the class interests of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie and their military-bonapartist representatives.

Thus the national struggles of the oppressed peoples are on the one hand a justified and progressive force against imperialism and against backward feudal, tribal or collaborationist elements within their own states. Yet as nationalisms they are utopian in that in the imperialist epoch no prolonged period of national development (on a capitalist basis) is likely to intervene. This utopian nationalism is in addition reactionary whenever it clashes with the development of the working class into a conscious force defending its own interests and seeking to lead the rural poor and the different nations oppressed by imperialism against it.

The attempt to create a pure non-class nationalism or even a 'proletarian nationalism' is a utopian and reactionary project. The view shared by Lenin and Trotsky was quite different. Trotsky summed up Lenin's position on the national question succinctly:

"It was Lenin's view that the right of self-determination was merely an application of the principles of bourgeois democracy in the sphere of national relations. A full-bodied, all-sided democracy under capitalism was unrealisable; in that sense the national independence of small and weak peoples was likewise 'unrealisable'. However,

even under imperialism, the working class did not refuse to fight for democratic rights, including among them the right of each nation to its independent existence. Moreover, in certain portions of our planet it was imperialism itself that invested the slogan of national self-determination with extraordinary significance." (*Leon Trotsky, Stalin, Vol 1, p.229*)

For Marxists, as opposed to all forms and types of nationalists, the national question which arises from this demands only a consistent and total opposition to all national oppression. It does not oblige the proletarian vanguard to become nation-builders. Lenin was quite clear on this question:

"For Marxists the national programme ... advocates firstly the equality of nations and languages and the impermissibility of all privileges in this respect and also the right of nations to self-determination...secondly the principle of internationalism and uncompromising struggle against contamination of the proletariat with bourgeois nationalism, even of the most refined kind." (*Critical remarks on the National Question.*)

When Lenin talks of the 'most refined' nationalism he means that of the oppressed - indeed he refers to that of "*the most oppressed and persecuted nation - the Jews...*" He concludes that:

"...It is the Marxist's bounden duty to stand for the most resolute and consistent democratism on all aspects of the national question. Its task is largely a negative one. But this is the limit the proletariat can go to in supporting nationalism, for beyond that begins the 'positive' activity of the bourgeoisie striving to fortify nationalism. (bid)

The argumentation about how many nations or 'nationalities' or 'national groups' exist in South Africa, while interesting in itself bears no decisive importance for our programme. What decides the existence or non-existence of nations is not the cognitions of theoreticians or the chop-logic of politicians trying to bolster up artificial stages, but the existence or development of national struggles.

In South Africa the 'national' question is an aspect of the general democratic revolution, that is, the destruction of the racist dictatorship over all non-white South Africans. Without recognition of this reality all 'nationalisms', tribalisms or religious community ideologies will play a divisive role in the general democratic struggle. The apartheid state has realised this from the outset - hence its Bantustan and community policies aimed at Balkanising South Africa.

Yet a 'positive' espousal of 'Black Nationalism' or a two nation and even a one nation theory, also disarms the proletariat. The 'national' question par excellence is to end the brutal oppression and monstrous privileges of the whites and to unify the artificially separated people of South Africa. But the proletariat's programme and its demands cannot stop here. It has to overcome the 'tribalist' ideologies of the Bantustan leaders like Buthelezi here and now and counter the constant attempts of Botha and company to set the linguistic groups and

communities at one another's throats. This means allaying the fears of any language group or community amongst the oppressed that it will be a helpless minority in the new state.

Therefore the proletariat should make clear that it is fighting for a unified South Africa which is free of all 'racial' or 'national' privilege and oppression. This would mean the free use of all languages in education and cultural life, the creation of local government which ensures no oppression of one community by another. It would also mean that whilst the working class, whether under capitalism or under its own dictatorship needs a large and centralised state as possible, this must be a voluntarily chosen centralism.

The workers' party should therefore include in its programme for the morrow of the destruction of apartheid, the right of self-determination for all non-oppressor peoples; for all those for whom autonomy or even separate statehood would not mean oppression for another people. This programme alone enables the working class to assemble around it all the oppressed peoples without succumbing to bourgeois nationalist influence itself.

Seen as Lenin saw it, the 'national question' is not an obstacle to the seizure of power by the proletariat. It does not necessitate a separate national liberation stage as the ANC/SACP claim but is a task of the *permanent revolution* which will only be fulfilled progressively if the proletariat seizes power. The history of the other African states shows that where 'national liberation' installs the bourgeoisie or its military-bonapartist caretakers, this does not solve the question of nationalism, tribalism and separate communities. The bitter and bloody experience of the Congo, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia have shown this. The South African proletariat can and must solve this question - as the Russian proletariat did in 1917 - under its own class rule.

The ANC/SACP's repeated insistence that national self-determination is the decisive issue is the stance of petit-bourgeois democracy, of nationalism as opposed to proletarian revolution. The apartheid state's repressive apparatus exists to ensure the super-exploitation of the black proletariat and the exclusion from the land of the great mass of toilers. It is the fight against this unendurable exploitation and oppression that is the main explosive charge of the South African revolution. The masses see democracy - one person one vote - as the means to end this nightmare.

South African Stalinism is *a priori* wedded to keeping the struggle against apartheid within the limits of a bourgeois revolution. It has subsequently arranged and re-arranged its view of the national question to fit this strategic commitment.

PERMANENT REVOLUTION

Trotsky neither confused the national question nor indeed any other major bourgeois-democratic struggle (the land question, the democratic republic) with the struggle of the proletariat for its own social emancipation. Nor did he draw from their distinction the conclusion that separate historic stages and distinct class rules

(dictatorships) were imposed by this fact. If he had conflated bourgeois-democratic and socialist tasks by calling the former socialist he would have thereby been a petit-bourgeois populist - whose 'socialism' would become an instrument of deception for the proletariat. If he had espoused a stages theory he would have been a Menshevik.

Despite Stalinist slanders Trotsky was neither. The theory of permanent revolution neither ignores the democratic revolutionary tasks nor confuses them with socialist ones. What this means was expressed by Trotsky quite clearly in the one major article he devoted to South Africa. (*On the South African Theses. Writings of Leon Trotsky 1934-5*). He stressed heavily the fact of racial and national oppression exercised by the whites:

"The South African possessions of Great Britain form a dominion only from the point of view of the white minority. From the point of view of the black majority, South Africa is a slave colony".

This gives the starting point, the enormous explosive social force to the revolution in South Africa. It is, Trotsky says: *"unthinkable without the awakening of the native masses"* involving the growth of *"confidence in their strength, a heightened personal consciousness, a cultural growth."* Trotsky continues:

"Under these conditions, the South African republic will emerge first of all as a 'black republic' ... But it is entirely obvious that the predominant majority of the population, liberated from slavish dependence, will put a certain imprint on the state.

In so far as a victorious revolution will radically change the relation not only between the classes but also between the races and will assure to the blacks that place in the state that corresponds to their numbers, thus far will the social revolution in South Africa also have a national character.

We have not the slightest reason to close our eyes to this side of the question or to diminish its significance. On the contrary, the proletarian party should in words and deeds openly and boldly take the solution of the national (racial) question in its hands.

Nevertheless, the proletarian party can and must solve the national problem by its own methods. The historical weapon of national liberation can be only the class struggle".

Trotsky goes on to criticise the alternative method developed by the Stalinised Comintern which turned national liberation into "an empty democratic abstraction that is elevated above the reality of class relations". In this scheme "different classes liberate themselves (temporarily) from material interests and become simple 'anti-imperialist' forces." To encourage them to perform this act of class amnesia they are promised a "national-democratic" state.

Reference to Lenin's pre-1917 position is, says Trotsky, entirely fraudulent: "Lenin always spoke about a revolutionary bourgeois democratic dictatorship and not about a spiritual 'people's state'". Moreover, he drew no strategic class alliance perspective: "he did not offer a bloc of all 'anti-czarist forces' but carried out an independent class policy of the proletariat. An 'anti-czarist' bloc was the idea of the Russian Social Revolutionaries and the Left Cadets, that is the parties of the petty and middle bourgeoisie."

Again Trotsky stresses:

"The bolshevik Party defended the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination with the methods of proletarian class struggle, entirely rejecting the charlatan 'anti-imperialist' blocs with the numerous petit-bourgeois 'national' parties of czarist Russia (the Polish Socialist Party - PPS the party of Pilsudski in czarist Poland - Dashnaki in Armenia, the Ukrainian nationalists, the Jewish Zionists, etc. etc.).

The Bolsheviks have always mercilessly unmasked these parties, as well as the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, their vacillations and adventurism, but especially their ideological lie of being above the class struggle. Lenin did not stop his intransigent criticism even when circumstances forced upon him this or that episodic, strictly practical, agreement with them."

There could be no question of any permanent alliance with them under the banner of 'anti-czarism'. Thus Trotsky rejects the grossly opportunist use of the 'anti-imperialist united front' developed by the Stalinist Comintern into a strategic alliance committed (deceitfully) to the establishment of a bourgeois nationalist regime and later openly developed as the Popular Front. Trotsky agrees that it is completely wrong to "compete with the African Nationalist Congress in nationalist slogans" as the South African Trotskyists' theses put it, but makes clear that this must mean neither abstention from the democratic tasks nor capitulation to nationalism.

The Bolshevik-Leninists (Trotskyists) must "put themselves in defence of the Congress, as it is, in all cases where it is being attacked by the white oppressors". They must recognise and support the progressive tendencies in the programme of the Congress. They must

"unmask before the native masses the inability of the congress to achieve the realisation of even its own demands, because of its superficial, conciliatory policy. In contradistinction to the Congress, the Bolshevik-Leninists develop a programme of revolutionary class struggle."

Trotsky stresses that united action, temporary united fronts, are possible.

"Separate episodic agreements with the

Congress, if they are forced by the circumstances, are permissible only within the framework of strictly defined practical tasks, with the retention of full and complete independence of our own organisation and freedom of political criticism".

Trotsky sums up the perspective of permanent revolution for South Africa. It does not leap over the "national or the agrarian questions" but points out that these "can be solved only in a revolutionary way". That this "leads inevitably to the dictatorship of the proletariat, which guides the native peasant masses; and that the dictatorship of the proletariat will open an era of soviet regime and socialist reconstruction".

Lastly Trotsky stresses that it would not be sufficient to repeat this "cornerstone of our programme" as an abstraction:

"... the masses must be brought to this general 'strategic' formula through the medium of a series of tactical slogans. It is possible to work out these slogans, at every given stage, only on the basis of an analysis of the concrete circumstances of the life and struggle of the proletariat and peasantry and the whole internal and international situations."

AZAPO AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The main representative of the Black Consciousness tradition, Azapo, oscillates between a two and a one nation theory. More specifically its 'final goal' is 'One Azania, One Nation' yet its present definition of the national struggle to overthrow white rule centres on the black working class and its black middle class allies and excludes the whites on principle:

"For us the class alliances that need to be forged are those between the black working class and sections of the black middle class, those willing to act on the dictates of the working class..."

Azapo sincerely denies being anti-white but draws from this a false conclusion: "Black people are incapable of racism. By racism we mean the discrimination against a group of people by another group with the aim of subjugation" (*Cape Action League News, June/July 1984*)

Class alliances can only be based on common class interests. To talk of an alliance with the middle class on the basis of the latter accepting 'dictates' and the goal of a 'socialist' Azania is typical petit-bourgeois populism. Whilst individuals from the middle classes, possibly in large numbers, can join the working class forces, accepting their socialist goal they can do so only on the basis of forsaking and renouncing their own class standpoint. If they do this it is in no sense a class alliance. On the other hand, the working class can win allies, form blocs or united fronts with other classes for limited common goals. There will, however, always be a probability that the bourgeoisie will betray such temporary alliances out of fear of the proletariat preferring subordination to its oppressor 'class brothers'.

This is one more way of saying that the 'national' bourgeoisie, despite its oppression, cannot consistently and firmly fight against external imperialism or internal reaction. The petty bourgeoisie is more radical but whether



Trotsky with Lenin

it will hold firmly to the struggle depends on the strength and the forward march of the proletariat. Otherwise its nature is to vacillate. If the proletariat, however, is misled into sharing not only a struggle but an ideology (nationalism) and an organisation (a peoples party or front) with the petit-bourgeoisie it is heading for disaster.

The black workers need first and foremost not two-class or non-class parties, organisations or strategic united fronts but a revolutionary class party whose programme is internationalist. All nations and all nationalism can become oppressive and racist. Unfortunately, present oppression does not give immunity from the future possibility of becoming an oppressor. The tragic history of Zionism in this century proves this all too clearly. Black exclusionism is not racist as the Stalinists falsely claim; but it is nationalist and, therefore, not socialist.

Azapo wants to merge socialist and nationalist ideologies. In reality they abandon a purely democratic position without achieving a proletarian internationalist one:

"We reject the concept of race. There can be no two or three different races or nations in South Africa. We are striving for the emergence of a single undivided nation in South Africa and for a society which is non-exploitative."

This is an inconsistently democratic position. By espousing positively a 'one-nation' position its defenders deny self-determination to the various potential minorities within South Africa.

Of course now, under the apartheid state the claims of the Bantustan leaders to be exercising national self-determination are completely bogus since these statelets are not the result of a free choice for separation by their peoples but were brutally imposed by the racist regime. Forcible population transfers gave them what spurious homogeneity they can claim.

Nevertheless, the Xhosa (18%), Sotho (13%), Zulu (20%), Vhacenda(2%), Tswana(9%), Swazi (2%) and Ndebele(2%) speaking communities or peoples nevertheless exist. Equally the 'coloured' (9%) and the Asians (34%) constitute as yet distinct communities. These distinctions may have dissolved in the trade union or anti-apartheid struggle for the vanguard elements and for large sections of the working class. It is indeed vital for the struggle against apartheid that there is the maximum unity. Therefore, the oppressed peoples should combine wherever they are willing to do so in non-racial, non-'national' organisations.

The class best able to accomplish this is the working class whose organisations can be, are and should be formed on this basis. To fight the bosses and the state this unity is essential. But in the homelands and outside them there remain 'backward' sections of the masses. To maintain and strengthen unity and to bring the 'backward' sections in behind the vanguard it is vital to undercut any suggestion that any of these 'peoples' or communities will on the achievement of majority rule be coerced into a unitary state or that in a Black republic they may expect to find themselves an oppressed minority. Apart from anything else this is important in order to undermine the demagoguery of wretches such as Buthelezi.

Given the fate of the Ugandan Asians or the 'tribal minorities' in Zimbabwe, it would be foolish to suggest that a black republic would be incapable of national oppression. All bourgeois states and even Stalinist degenerate(d) workers states ruled by a bureaucratic caste can and do oppress national minorities. The need to fight to abolish the Bantustans of today does not release black South African/Azaniaan democrats and revolutionary socialists from maintaining within their programme the right of oppressed nations to self-determination. Moreover, these peoples must themselves decide if they are a nation and if they wish autonomy or separation, freely and by democratic means.

The reality of South Africa today is that there are divisions in the oppressed majority. These divisions have been fostered by Botha and aided by the 'homeland' leaders. The spring 1986 clashes over land between Ndebeles and Sothos indicate this. The existence and serious threat that Inkatha poses, with its murderous attacks on militants and its attempts to split the trade unions, must in Natal be politically combatted and undermined. And here the



assertion of the unity of the Azanian people is insufficient to win over the masses who are not directly involved in militant union struggles or school and community boycotts.

NEVILLE ALEXANDER

The principal writer on the national question opposed to the ANC/SACP tradition is Neville Alexander (No Sizwe) author of *One Azania, One Nation - the National Question in South Africa* (1979) and *An Approach to the National Question in South Africa* (Azania Worker, vol 2, No.2, Dec. 1985).

Alexander mounts a powerful critique of the racist regime's nationalities policy and of the multi-national positions of the SACP and the ANC. He sets out to combat both the Balkanisation policies of the apartheid regime and its 'homeland' stooges and the Stalinist stages theory that dictates a bourgeois democratic solution to the anti-apartheid struggle. He does this because he believes that "a pluralist position on the national question carries the inevitable implication of a two-stage revolution" (No Sizwe p.106).

Alexander wishes to give the proletariat the leading role in the national struggle, to proclaim its unbreakable linkage to the struggle against capitalism and to give it a socialist goal. This leads him to advocate one form, and one form only, of resolution to the anti-apartheid struggle - a unitary South African / Azanian nation state. Not only is the "reactionary 'nationalism' of the 'homeland' leaders" bogus, but consequently "the 'nations' they claim to represent, be they 'Xhosa', 'Tswana', 'Coloured', 'Indian', or anything else are non-existent entities which no recourse to theory can create." (No Sizwe p.180). He is willing to grant only that the "so called 'ethnic groups' are specifically either language groups, colour-castes, religious groups or administrative groups and no more."

However, he makes a serious hole in his own case when he concedes that they could attain national identity but only as a result of counter-revolution and defeat (e.g. the formation of Israel out of Palestine or Pakistan out of India). As we have seen in the struggle to prevent such divisions, the refusal of recognition of the nationhood, ethnic group status etc. of these groupings will be of no help whatsoever.

The other problem with Neville Alexander's nationality theory is that it leads to a merging of nation and class and a simple identification of the anti-apartheid struggle itself with the struggle against capitalism. In his position:

"... the racial oppression of the black people is understood as a function of the capitalist system those institutions and practices which have given rise to national oppression, to the exclusion of the majority of the people from the body politic and from the enjoyment of equal rights in all spheres. This means nothing else than the abolition of capitalism itself" (No Sizwe p.178).

Alexander argues that because of apartheid: "...the struggle assumes a national form. But its content is necessarily a social one. It cannot be halted at the mere integration of the black people into the existing economic relationships on a basis of 'equality'." (ibid.)

The national question is thus released from its basis in bourgeois society and becomes the basis of a struggle against bourgeois society. The nation for Alexander is to be formed without the bourgeoisie and indeed against the bourgeoisie: "The nation - consists of all the people who are prepared to throw off the yoke of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression" (ibid). Therefore Alexander concludes that:

"The positive historical task of the black workers in solving the national question in South Africa is the construction of the (socialist) nation of Azania" (An Approach to the National Question ...)

By giving the proletariat a positive approach to the nation Alexander espouses a form of nationalism - albeit one that he insists has a proletarian class content. He has already rejected Lenin and Stalin's views on the national question as Euro-centred. He claims that in Europe it was natural to think that the national question was a bourgeois one. In the Imperialised world it is different. Again Alexander confuses national struggle with nationalism and (falsely) ascribes to Lenin the view that he assigned to the

bourgeoisie the role of the leading class in this bourgeois-democratic question. Lenin no more did this than he assigned this role to the bourgeoisie in the agrarian question of the democratic republic. He fought for the proletariat to take the lead in the resolution of all these questions (questions which together comprise the 'bourgeois revolution').

Nor did Trotsky disagree with this approach. He simply insisted that they could only in fact be resolved by the proletariat establishing an alliance with the peasantry and passing uninterruptedly from bourgeois-democratic to proletarian social tasks. This did not lead in any way to Trotsky confusing the class nature of these tasks.

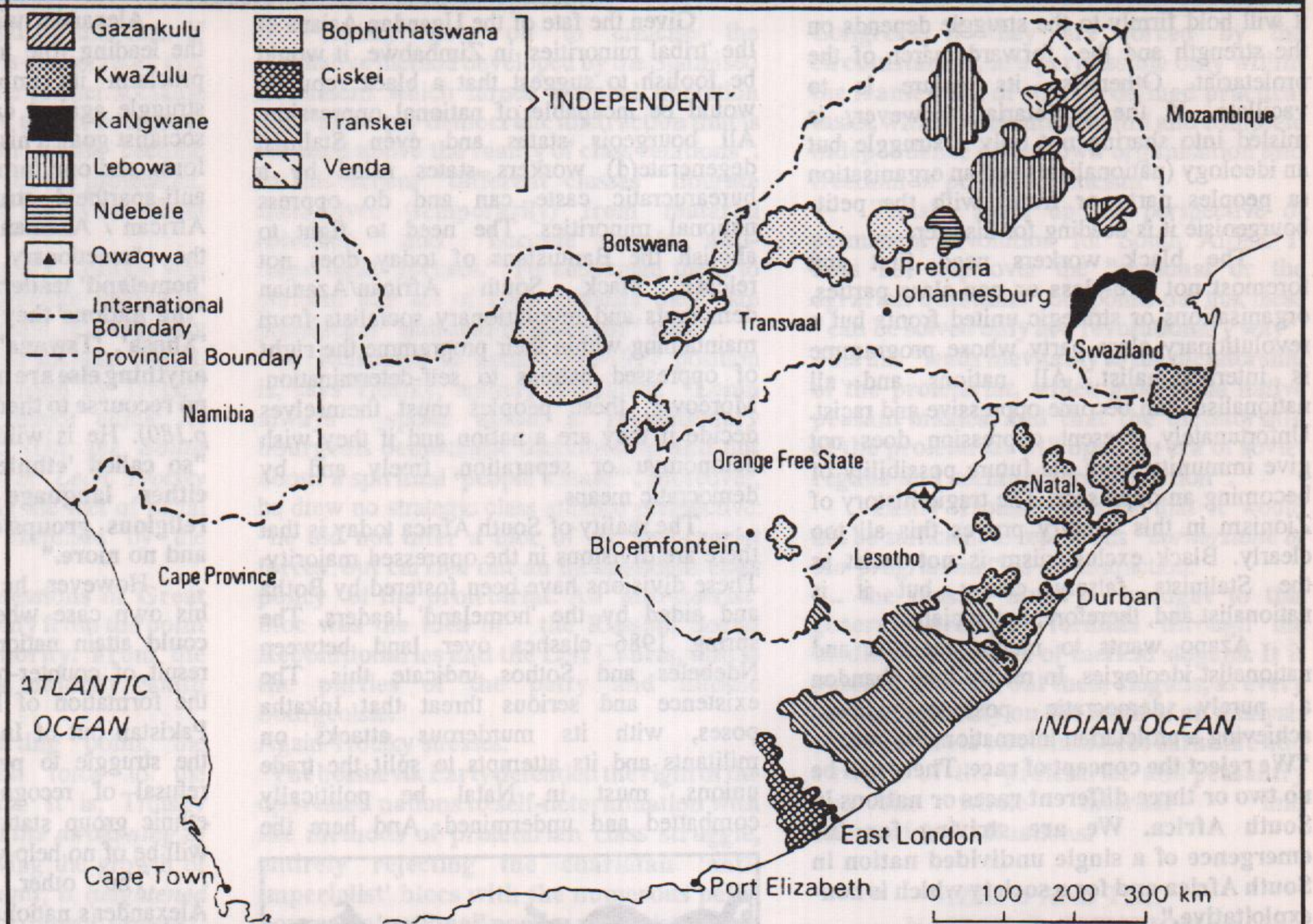
If one insists, as Alexander does, in confusing these tasks via an eclectic 'form and content' analogy - which the Stalinist charlatans resort to in order to yoke together vulgar contradictions - then the national struggle is turned into an utopian ideology and the proletariat is robbed of its internationalism.

"It can be stated clearly, therefore, that in historical practice in the 20th century, working class movements and their organisations in different countries have in fact led struggles for national liberation and nation-building or consolidating the particular nations in the national states. Of course this does not imply in any chauvinistic or exclusivist sense. The point is simply that the working class starts from a national perspective rather than an internationalist one." (*An Approach to the National Question...*)

This positive espousal of nationalism leads to a subjective-idealist approach to the national question. Alexander adopts this from the writings of various 'Academic Marxists' originating from the post-Althusserian school, especially Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1985) which defines the nation as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign..."

Alexander himself remarks that this 'smacks of idealism' but merely offers a corrective to it by adding that this imagined community must be "a social reality to which individuals inside and outside the nation have to respond" and that it must be "embedded in very concrete capitalist or socialist relations on concrete national territory". Alexander thus merely insists that it be a collective i.e. a class 'imagining' and this must rest itself in either capitalist or post-capitalist social relations.

This however does not escape from idealism and it creates as its subjective



standpoint 'the class' whether bourgeois or proletarian. Naturally this ideal nationality that the proletariat has positively to establish has to have its consciousness prepared for it by specialists in the production of ideas - intellectuals. Alexander praises Anderson's work because it "enables us to concentrate on the nation as an ideological construct" (*ibid* p.5). From this it is clear that "The positive historical task of the black workers in solving the national question in South Africa is the construction of the (socialist) nation of Azania" (*ibid*) and that: "... it is the nature of the process of liberation that the political and ideological construction of the new nation precedes its socio-economic realisation."

Alexander believes that in the task of 'ideological construction' it is the role of 'organic intellectuals' such as himself to assist the working class:

"to fashion an oppositional or, more accurately a counter-hegemonic ideology. This they do by, amongst other things, careful attention to the language which is inserted into and generalised in the political programmes and actions of the organisations of their class. The importance of this scholarly activity derives from the fact that it is in and through language that the individual is constituted as a subject". (*ibid*)

From this approach, adopted from 'semiology', flows the obsession with language and terminology - with denying the terms nation, national group, ethnic group to the various groupings of South African society as well as his insistence on the oneness of the Azanian nation. It leads him also to an essentially propagandist role for the 'organic intellectuals'.

Indeed the role that Neville Alexander and the Cape Action League seem to have set themselves is to 'permeate' Azapo with a 'correct' view of the national question, namely that

"the struggle for national liberation is, from the point of view of the exploited classes,

the inescapable political form of the class struggle".

This view can indeed be accepted - in words - by the Black Consciousness Movement without it altering their petit-bourgeois populist practice one iota. Indeed Alexander is in effect manufacturing an ideology, in the negative sense of the term, one that can be used to demagogically deceive the proletariat in the way that Mugabe, Machel and others have done before.

The duty of the proletarian vanguard in South Africa is to defend a consistently revolutionary democratic position on the national question which opposes all existing national oppression and which will give no ground for any future oppression. This means adopting an internationalist not a nationalist viewpoint.

Trotsky once observed with regard to Marx's famous slogan, 'The workingmen have no fatherland' that it has 'more than once been evaluated by philistines as an agitational quip'. The slogan has not been outdated either by the incorporation of the working class within the democratic system as the social-democrats of Europe claim or by the contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations, as the 'Third World' petit-bourgeois nationalists assert.

All positive espousal of 'national interests' involves the fracturing of the working class's unity both 'at home' and 'abroad'. Whilst the working class is not at all indifferent to national oppression it fights it with the purpose of overthrowing 'its own' ruling class and helping its class brothers and sisters to do likewise. In short, revolutionaries must take their part in the national struggle, their banner held aloft, and on it must be inscribed the words of the *Communist Manifesto*:

Workers of all countries, unite!

THE POLITICS OF IRISH FREEDOM REVIEW

"To understand the significance of this recent development within Sinn Féin one must understand that it comes after many decades of stagnation. In the past the republican movement was a separatist movement with radical tendencies. In its current embodiment the radical tendency is for the first time in control, and in institutionalising the radical tendency a very important historic job has been done. In our thinking we have brought to light elements which were obscured in the past." (p.160)
"This process of critical self-analysis and reappraisal has led to frank and open discussion on many issues which would not otherwise have surfaced." (p.162)

This book is the most extended analysis yet put forward in the name of the 'radical tendency' in Irish republicanism by its leading figure, Gerry Adams. And while the book is apparently addressed to a British and international audience it must also be seen as part of the "critical self-analysis", so called, of this leadership.

The book contains many familiar references and arguments that would trip easily off the tongue of any Republican, without any particular theoretical coherence or programmatic sharpness. But much of the attractive mystique of Republicanism is nothing more in reality than this ideological vagueness, so Adams treads carefully. He avoids many of the thorny issues raised by any full balance sheet of what has happened since 1969 and by the socialist pretensions of his 'tendency'. There is no actual discussion of the content of key questions such as unemployment, women's oppression or the capitalist offensive against the working class, nor any discussion of class struggle at all.

Rather, in a conversational almost spontaneous form he tries to draw together a consensus perspective from the uncertainty and the challenges of Sinn Féin's recent conjunctural turn to extended electoral politics throughout the island. For that reason, though Adams is at pains to emphasise that it is a personal statement, the book gives a good indication of both the positive developments and limitations of the politics of this movement which for nearly 20 years has stood at the head of an overt nationalist struggle against British imperialism in the North.

Military and Political Struggle

Gerry Adams begins the book by recalling the release of the 1956 internees, in 1961. At that time the movement was defeated, isolated, decimated in numbers, in a state of ideological crisis. Drawing very much on his own experience, and so recalling his own sympathies, Adams charts the emergence of a new leadership and the movement's new political focus of activity through the sixties.

As a youth, despite being from a Republican family, he had no awareness of the '56 campaign or of the IRA until a decade later when he was active in the debates and local social agitations of Republicans. As he describes it the "militaristic and fairly apolitical tendency" (p8-9) had been

discredited by the failure of the '56 Border bombing campaign. The movement was forced to seek new ways to help push the British out of Ireland. It was a formative period for Adams and these were questions of "strategy and tactics" which are still his main concern today.

His own sympathies were with those, many of whom ended up in the Official Sinn Féin (later SFWP, now Workers Party), who emphasised the importance of taking up social and economic issues. Yet when the split came, a split he describes as "a major setback for the republican cause" (p.35), he did not go with the Dublin leadership.

The issue as he explains it is significant. According to Adams' version the pure militarists had long since lost any influence. Rather it was a split over how social and political issues were to be pursued and specifically over whether any reform at all could be gained within the Northern Ireland state. If it was partially reformable, as the Dublin leadership - and their political cousins in the Communist Party - believed, it would be possible especially through the civil rights movement and the trade unions to establish basic democratic rights which could then be exercised to build a mass movement around social and economic demands. If the state was irreformable - the Provisionals' defining position - then it seemed to be necessary to take up social issues now only insofar as they helped what he saw as the single valid task of smashing the Northern state.

"Members of the Dublin leadership of the republican movement came to Belfast and I was among those who went to the lectures they gave. I found them very interesting and instructive but they failed to accord with my experience and opinions at that time. In my view, and to some degree with hindsight, the development of the 'stages' theory of progressive democratisation was conditional in the first place on the state and its supporters being willing to redress the state's own injustices. This, it was rapidly becoming apparent, was hardly the case. In particular I felt that the analysis of the ways to unite the Protestant and Catholic working class ignored the very nature of the state and my own occasional personalised and parochial encounters with loyalism." ... (p 14-15)

"What we were saying to the Dublin visitors was, 'Look, you can talk about all this coming together of Protestant and Catholic working class but here's yet another instance where the sectarian card was played and the people who had been united were effectively separated. Your notions just don't square with reality'. If the state would not allow Catholics and Protestants to get a pedestrian crossing built together, it would hardly sit back and watch them organise the revolution together."

"They also saw the trade unions as a main means of pursuing politics. But again my experience gave me doubts ... even when one tried to look for something very simple through the trade unions they just didn't respond. My own experience was that the sectarian card could be invoked effectively and that there was little basis for making any progress on the national question through the trade union movement. And both of these experiences flew in the face of what the republican leadership



Gerry Adams photo by Derek Speirs/Report

was proposing. The nature of the civil rights struggle added to these contradictions." (p 15-16)

However, having rejected the Officials' stagism of democratic reform first, then national unity and independence, and only then the socialist programme, did the Provisionals not in fact replace it with a new stagism of national independence first and the socialist programme later? That is the question any socialist would have to pose.

The debate in that period was cut short and 'resolved' by the explosion of struggle which posed the immediate need for armed self-defence of the nationalist communities against sectarian pogroms of the B Specials and RUC, the living proof of the irreformability of the northern state.

"That the Republican movement now turned to armed resistance had nothing to do with any ingrained militarism, but had everything to do with the stark realities of the situation." (p.34)

But it was more than simply the objective situation of '69-'71 which put 'social questions' on the backboiler for the Provisionals. It is clear that the only response their politics allowed to assaults by the state was a purely physical-force guerrilla counteroffensive.

When he breaks off his chronology of events in the North to examine southern society we soon see the limited extent to which 'social questions' do fit into his republican programme. The south, he says, has nominal political independence but not economic independence. Hence the cutting edge of imperialism in the south unlike the north is economic. It is around social and economic questions that the national question is posed in the south. He believes in a widespread 'republican instinct' among workers and small farmers and looks enviously at Fianna Fail's success in the 1930s in gathering those workers and small farmers behind its rhetorical banner of economic nationalism. He wants now to tap that supposed 'instinct'.

But this seeming desire to take up social issues in the south becomes even more diffuse and peripheral when extended to the heartland of the physical force struggle, even

though Adams clearly recognises the severe economic effects of imperialist capitalism in the north. The civil rights mobilisations are not seen in retrospect as the crucial opportunity they actually then represented to give a lead in a fight against the grinding poverty of the northern catholic working class. He does not even seem to recognise that such issues were immediately posed in the civil rights revolt by the social conditions of the catholic nationalist ghettos plagued by emigration, unemployment and discrimination even at this high point of the post-war economic boom. The working class masses emerge in his picture only briefly as if in labour to give birth to the phoenix of the elite republican army:

"Working people took control of aspects of their own lives, organised their own districts, in a way which deeply antagonised and traumatised the Catholic middle class and particularly the Catholic church hierarchy. It was an experience of community oneness, of unselfishness at every hand. And when more than barricades were required for defence from the armed forces of the RUC, loyalists and, soon, the British army, this generation of the IRA emerged. ... by March 1972 the IRA had not only created a defensive force of unprecedented effectiveness, they had also carried out a massive offensive which had succeeded in its aim of bringing down Stormont. (p.53)

Guerrilla offensive or Mass Defence?

Adams's analysis has important flaws at this point. Undoubtedly the IRA did mount a powerful if chaotic offensive bombing campaign. But they could not defend catholic areas. The British Army walked in, where the masses themselves had kept out the RUC, and took down the barricades which were a crucial defence against loyalist terror. In the Republican view this was inevitable simply because the IRA could not take on and defeat the British Army. But that ignores the mass mobilisations which first defended the Bogside and West Belfast, which put up the barricades and which could have kept them up if given the leadership to do so. Furthermore those mass mobilisations could have been the basis of building a mass anti-imperialist movement to organise local workers' councils and take up the full range of social, economic and political issues posed directly for the impoverished and disenfranchised workers.

In practice, the Provisionals led the best militants away from mass political action to staff its guerrilla campaign. In this way the politics of the Republicans contributed to the demobilisations which then occurred as the British Army took control of the streets and then enforced mass internment and carried out the Bloody Sunday massacre. This offensive did not halt the Republicans but did close off the path of direct mass action and defence of "free" zones. To this day the open access to catholic areas for loyalist murder gangs is a direct product of the IRA's decision, following ineffective gun battles with the British Army, that short of having smashed the northern state self-defence of the catholic areas was impossible. This despite the Battle of the Bogside victory and a whole period which illustrated the potential effectiveness of mass action as a way of defending the ghettos.

It is also clear from Adam's account that

underlying this is a view, which Adams and the republican movement paradoxically shared with the Officials, which was that economic struggles cannot be pursued with any success in the North whether because of the lack of democratic rights or because of the oppressive brutality of the state. That led the Officials to emphasise the struggle for democratic reforms. It has led the Provisionals to focus abstractly on the single *physical force* task of smashing the northern state and has led it to take up all other issues, be they physical defence, economic demands or women's rights, only insofar as they serve that single end.

Between 1969 and 1972 that meant abandoning 'social questions' in order to build a military offensive. Onwards from 1972 - "the year of victory" - the bombing offensive became counterproductive overall and military stalemate set in as the state forces were reconstructed into a formidable apparatus of repression as one part of an overall political offensive by the British which included wooing the middle class nationalists, pushing for bourgeois power-sharing, 'Ulsterisation' of the conflict and 'criminalisation' of the republicans. Adams argues that the type of urban guerrilla warfare used in the north forces the IRA to be particularly sensitive to its level of political support in its areas of operation. But various factors, especially the republicans' abdication of political representation of the nationalist minority to the bourgeois SDLP has undermined the ability of the republican movement to hold the level of political support which, in Adams' view, the military struggle needed. It would be more honest to admit however, that the mass of the nationalist working class were systematically marginalised by the nature of the guerrilla campaign, as well as being left easy electoral prey to the constitutional nationalists. However, the result was interpreted by Adams to point to the need for electoral and 'community' politics. Again, it was less a reassessment by the leadership and far more the sheer force of (initially independent) mass struggle around the prisoners' protest which forced Sinn Féin in this direction.

Programme of Republicanism

The whole book indicates clearly that political and economic issues were only to be taken up insofar as they served to draw in wider layers of support for the national independence goal.

"The trade union movement failed to develop policies against discrimination and lost altogether the socialist republican legacy of James Connolly. The same problems that beset the trade union movement applied in the case of building a class-based socialist party.

Ordinary people throughout Ireland have absorbed the reality of their powerlessness under British domination, whether in colonial or neo-colonial form."

Adams does not believe that an effective trade union movement can be built (or effectively fought for) at present either north or south; it could only be built in an independent Ireland. He does not believe that a socialist party of the workers which effectively advances their class interests can be built now; it can only be built in a united Ireland. He does not believe that there is any

way to begin to effectively defend workers at all; because the fundamental cause of the weakness of both the northern and southern economies is the lack of independence and unity. Such a starting point makes it impossible for the republican movement to seriously address these living issues.

He condemns the high level of unemployment among catholics, the draconian Payment of Debts Act, the jerrybuilt ghettoised housing, and he mentions the anti-pusher struggle of the Concerned Parents in Dublin. But besides some vague comments on the 'continuing problem' of the role of reform demands he makes no effort to explain or justify the lists of pieties that make up the republican election programmes in working class areas of the south. Sinn Féin's electioneering in reality is rooted in community politics, and however much more honestly than the bourgeois parties, it nevertheless imitates the same clientelist approach to vote getting instead of fighting for the self-organisation of the working class and oppressed around a programme of action that addresses their objective needs on all fronts of struggle. It trims its politics so as not to alienate conservative petit-bourgeois sections; hence its failure to mobilise in the battles on the anti-abortion (8th) and pro-divorce (defeated) constitutional amendments. Naturally, too, Adams avoids any explanation for the record of its elected councillors north and south. All is excused by pleading the "powerlessness" of the 'Irish people'. He explicitly turns his back on the need for leadership in mobilising the masses on a class basis, for this "breaks up the unity of the national independence movement by putting forward 'socialist' demands that have no possibility of being achieved until real independence is won; the result is that one gets neither independence nor socialism." (p.135)

Adams' 'socialism' quickly dissolves away to reveal his real political perspective, which is to fight only for those demands around which the broadest "Irish-Ireland movement" can be built "with an appeal to all major sections of Irish society" (p.135) including the SDLP. Such a position gives the farmers, the small businessmen and nationalist politicians, whose support he seeks, an effective veto over the movement's actual positions *in struggle* on economic and social questions. And even though such sections continue to spurn Adams' courtship, the very act of reserving a place for them, their very shadow, is a powerful enough influence within the republican movement, in the hands of Adams & Co., to enable embarrassing policy commitments such as "woman's right to choose abortion" to be easily deleted. The useful function of his 'socialist' rhetoric is simply to bind militant working class republicans to that doomed strategy of class collaboration.

Behind this lies the myth that it is somehow possible to build an independent, non-aligned, united Ireland, with a mixed (i.e. capitalist) economy, free from imperialism in an imperialist world. Any serious examination of Nasser in Egypt, Peron in Argentina, Mugabe in Zimbabwe and many other examples would show that this is indeed a utopian illusion. The existence of native capital, of state control of taxation and

exchange controls, about which Adams speaks, are utterly inadequate to establish a viable independent economy. Economic and social development has been possible only as part of an international division of labour and production ever since capitalism created a world economy. Continued 'development' by capitalist imperialism on its cruel terms, or the creation of a socialist world order are the only historic alternatives. Workers' states created in the teeth of imperialism are the only starting point for world socialism and in no sense whatever could Adams' *independent Ireland* be construed as a step in that direction, not to say a half-way house. For if the question of *what class rules* is not solved in the struggle to reconstruct the nation then the old ruling class interests in a new form will seize the advantage and enchain the working class forces that will have handed them a new lease of life.

It is precisely Adams' outlook that would lead to 'neither independence nor socialism' being achieved. For, only a working class consciously self-organised on an independent class programme can battle effectively against imperialism on all its fronts of oppression and super-exploitation, and replace its client statelets with the only historic alternative possible in a world of imperialist capitalism - a Workers' Republic. Only such a state can be a basis for genuine self-determination and not just the formal sham of 'independence' that typifies the post-colonial countries of the present epoch. It is precisely and only those political traditions and leaderships which Adams ignorantly dismisses as 'ultra-left' (and which he misrepresents) that have been vindicated throughout this century in warning against the petty-bourgeois limits and cross-class illusions of revolutionary nationalism.

From the standpoint of the class struggle and its immediate needs, Adams' book is not just an argument for the myth of a stagist road to independence and then class harmony. It amounts to an extended argument against a programme that would relate to the most immediate needs of the exploited and oppressed. Day in and day out workers are being made redundant, services are cut, Catholics suffer discrimination, both states enforce their repressive laws, women are driven back into domestic toil and sexual oppression. Points of struggle continuously arise for anti-unionists, workers, unemployed, women, youth, students to organise against their conditions. Those are immediate opportunities for socialists to relate to and work to build the conscious organised leadership of a class party with a programme that links these struggles to the goal of social, political and armed revolution against both states. No amount of electioneering or community politics can cover for Sinn Féin's rejection of this revolutionary socialist road. Gerry Adams does not believe that the working class by its position in capitalist society in Ireland today has any independent objective potential for revolutionary struggle; all the less therefore can he believe in offering it the subjective leadership and Party that it needs. For him the armalite and the ballot box, which he treats merely as an armalite without a trigger, are historically stronger than the self-organised masses of workers, unemployed,

women, youth and students bringing under their lead all oppressed non-working class sections.

The Republican movement may well come soon to a crossroads. For a long time after 1972 the demands of the armed struggle and the belief that a better leadership intensifying the struggle in new areas could be established kept many republicans loyal to the Provisional organisation. Adams' book encapsulates the thinking behind that revitalised strategy but reveals that it still contains the essential flaws of the 'old style' pure-and-simple physical force tradition. Sooner or later the inability of the programme of Republicanism either to establish its united independent Ireland or to concretely address the burning immediate social questions of the masses must lead to the decline of this heroic movement or to a break from it by its best and most class-conscious sections in the direction of revolutionary socialism. Socialist republican militants who critically analyse Gerry Adams' book will be taking the first step along that road.

But the break from revolutionary nationalism to the revolutionary internationalism of the working class struggle for socialism necessarily involves a process of conscious theoretical clarification, a thorough break from the confusions of 'socialist republicanism' to the scientific tradition of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. The need for this is made doubly obvious by the sheer confusion, ignorance and self-contradictions of Adams' theories about socialism. His claim to hold the 'classical view' of the relation of socialism to national struggles is revealing when analysed:

Marx, Connolly or Stalin?

"The true socialist will be an active supporter of the republican character of the national independence movement. He or she will realise that unless this character is maintained and unless the most radical social forces are in the leadership of the independence struggle then inevitably it must fail or compromise. This classical view of the matter contrasts with the ultra-left view, which counterposes republicanism and socialism and which breaks up the unity of the national independence movement by putting forward 'socialist' demands that have no possibility of being achieved until real independence is won ..."

But this is not the classical view of Lenin or Marx or Trotsky. It is an amalgam of two traditions - Connolly and Stalin, the one inadequate, the other wholly treacherous. For Connolly the national struggle was identified with the class struggle because the 'real' nation included the working class and the most radical petty bourgeois patriots but excluded the bourgeoisie; thus while he remained revolutionary and anti-capitalist, he tragically failed to distinguish the national and class struggles politically. He subordinated the working class vanguard to a petty-bourgeois force whose only historic role could be to open up the road to an independent bourgeois state. By contrast, the Stalinist tradition of popular fronts and strategic alliances 'against imperialism' of worker and 'patriotic capitalist' insists on

including the bourgeoisie and on trimming the programme of the workers in order to maintain that alliance. In contrast to Connolly, this Stalinist tradition is one of conscious class collaboration and stagism, a tradition soaked in the blood of millions of workers betrayed by Stalinist misleadership across the decades and across the globe. Adams' claim to be a disciple of Connolly sits uncomfortably with his appeals to bourgeois constitutional nationalists to join in a pan-nationalist front. It is far more congenial to the Stalinist stagist perspective. While Irish Stalinist writers have occasionally recognised their own differences with Connolly on this issue, they have until now been the main interpreters of Connolly to the Irish working class and republican movement, as witness Adams' reliance on the inveterate Stalinist Desmond Greaves for interpretations of Connolly.

Protestant Working Class

Among Connolly's weaknesses was a failure to adequately understand the roots of working class orangeism in Ulster. Adams, with nothing of Connolly's proud record of proletarian struggle in Belfast, blithely borrows a phrase from Connolly to excuse his total abandonment of any sense of duty as a 'socialist' to address the issue of the Protestant working class. Writing them off as an 'aristocracy of labour' he is clearly ignorant of the meaning of what this vital idea meant for Engels and Lenin. Connolly did not use the phrase in any worked-out way and certainly not scientifically with regard to the protestants. As IWG argues in *"Connolly and the Protestant Working Class"* (CS 20), a protestant labour aristocracy did exist, with a key role in cementing orange hegemony over the mass of non-aristocratic protestant workers. The understanding of this is important in beginning to address how to relate positively to the protestant working class in struggle - quite contrary to Adams' shallow clichéd evasion.

Turning his back on the protestant working class is not entirely inconsistent for Adams if his method overall subordinates all class struggle to nationalist stagism. It is, however, not consistent with thoroughgoing revolutionary bourgeois democracy to argue for a campaign of 'cultural nationalism' which does not now explicitly recognise in advance, the democratic right of any section of the citizenry of this island to reject his interpretation of what 'should' be 'Irish culture'. Adams fails to assert this democratic principle as a binding guarantee and condition of the struggle he envisages to replace the dominant language with Irish - which is now native to perhaps only 1% of the population.

Space does not permit adequate discussion of this issue, but underneath his advocacy of cultural nationalism there lies a grave danger of a potentially reactionary outlook which can have no part in the internationalist working class and socialist programme for the liberation of humanity from imperialist capitalism, Stalinist bureaucracy and all forms of oppression.

Letter from Eleuterio

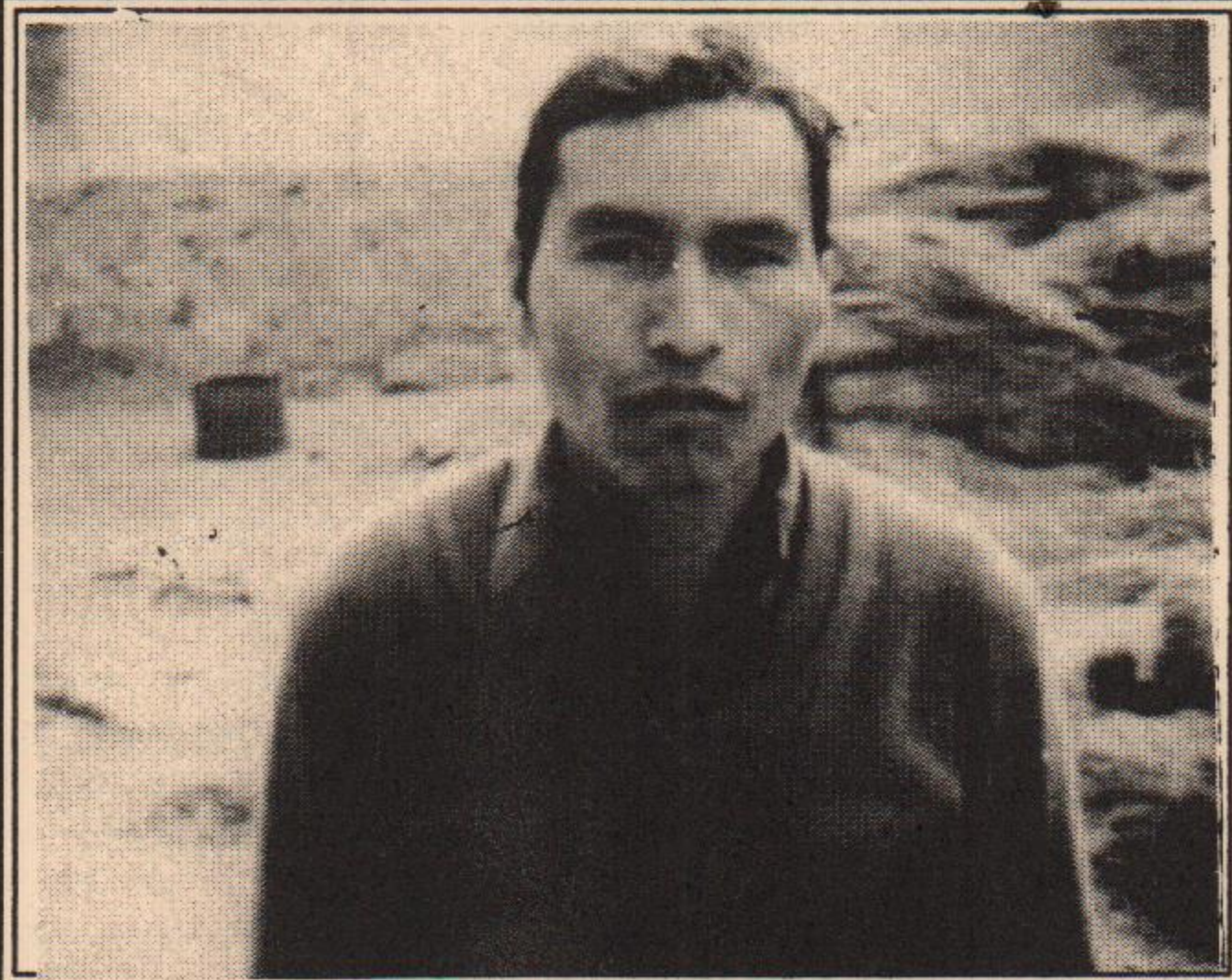
We print here a letter from Eleuterio Gutierrez who is at present still in gaol in Bolivia with his trial in 'recess' It is now 20 months since he was arrested in the midst of a general strike against the government's austerity programme in Bolivia. Despite the case against Eleuterio falling apart at the seams, with the main witness against him admitting his statements were untrue and made at the instigation of the mining police of the State Mining Corporation, Eleuterio remains in prison and in danger of being given a gaol sentence.

An appeal was circulated to Irish Trade Councils at the initiative of the IWG, and signed by widely known trade union, labour and socialist figures such as Matt Merrigan, former president of the ICTU. This resulted in a number of protest letters being sent to the Bolivian embassy in London and to the Bolivian President and solidarity messages to the Bolivian trade union federation. Castlebar Trades Council voted its support and Carlow Trades council called on member unions to take up the case.

In Britain the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office claimed that Gutierrez had only been arrested in May 1986 and had been caught 'red-handed' with five others stealing from his pit. This information was entirely false and has been answered with evidence from official records in Bolivia which has been circulated to British Labour MPs.

We call again on Trade Union, Labour and socialist groups to take up this case and once again protest to the nearest Bolivian Embassy which is
Bolivian Embassy,
106 Eaton Square,
London SW1.

This photo of Eleuterio in gaol was taken by a visiting delegate from the MRCI last August



Free Eleuterio!

Comrade Workers,

With this letter I have the honour to send you revolutionary greetings from all my worker comrades here. I know about the considerable economic help being organised and about the many mobilisations and pressures against the Bolivian Embassy in London and about the publication of my case in many newspapers, and how you are fighting for my immediate release. I am sending you my sincere thanks and also in the name of my family, which are at this moment in a state of abandonment.

As a mineworker for the Bolivian Mining Corporation in the mining site of Bolivar, I must tell you again that I have been falsely accused through slander, under pressure of the Government and the Company where I used to work. They have been using a well know criminal and anti-social element to accuse me of something I never committed at any moment. This is only because of my participation and because I am a leading member in the union over many years and I have been known as a 'dangerous element' for the managers of that company. At this time I am detained in the public gaol of Oruro since 30 September 1985. Until now no solution has been produced for resolving my problems, because the whole judicial system is very slow and because of the incapacity of the judge.

As you can see, comrades, I am totally innocent of the crime of which I am accused. Comibol and the Government are involved in a manoeuvre against me and they are trying to cover and obscure the political meaning of these problems.

Without more details I again send you my high regards and I think with proletarian unity we will go forward to a victory for a better future for the workers.

Eleuterio Gutierrez M.

Financial assistance is still desperately need for Eleuterio's family. Donations may be sent via the Secretary, Eleuterio Campaign, c/o 12 Langrishe Place, Dublin1 or to the international campaign secretary Steve Masterson, 14 Dennington House, Dennington Park Road, London NW6.

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Permanent Revolution is the theoretical journal of Workers Power, the British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International. It is available from IWG for £1.50 including postage.